"Murder at Banff" . . . . ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

"The Dutchman's Little Lesson". . . . . R. V. GERY

Short Stories

Twice A Month

January 25th

25c

30c in Canada

A Hashknife Story by **W. C. TUTTLE** "Plenty Rope"

missing

missing

ACTION, ADVENTURE, MYSTERY

Short

Every author's finest and

CONTENTS

PLENTY ROPE — **W. C. TUTTLE** — 6
(A Complete Novel)
"You Don't Happen to Be Hashknife Hartley, Do You?" And Hashknife's Answer to That Was That Anything Might Happen in Arizona.

THE GUY WHO KNEW TOO MUCH — **H. S. M. Kemp** — 47
The Corporal of the Mounted Was Friendly; He'd Even Help Paper the Kitchen Wall. And That Was Evidence

UNCONQUERABLE — **Bill Adams** — 64
The Second Mate Tells a Story of an Ordinary Seaman—and the Story Is Far from Ordinary

MURDER AT BANFF — **Allan Vaughan Elston** — 72
Masquerade Time in the Great Resort Hotel—and That Was the Time That Someone Knew He Could Move About Unmolested and Unseen

KEE-YI OF THE CLOUDS — **Thomas Francis Norris** — 90
A Sky Bandit Is Operating in the Red Granite Peak District

THE HUNGRY DOG — **Frank Gruber** — 98
(Second Part of Four)
Johnny Fletcher Makes a Hundred—More or Less—St. Bernards a Part of His Act. And the Act Is to Cash in on a Certain Inheritance

SHORT STORIES issued semi-monthly by SHORT STORIES, Inc., 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City, N. Y., and entered as second class matter, November 24, 1937, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION PRICE in the United States, American Possessions, Mexico and South America, $5.00 per year; to Canada, $6.50; and to all other countries, $6.60. Price payable in advance. January 25, 1941. Vol. CLXXIV. No. 2. Whole Number 842.

T. RAYMOND FOLEY, *President.* WILLIAM J. DELANEY, *Secretary and Treasurer.* D. McILWRAITH, *Editor.*

BIGGEST AND BEST —TWICE A MONTH

Stories

latest stories—no reprints

JANUARY 25th, 1941

NO MATCH FOR A KILLER **Harrison Hendryx 125**
"The Country Needs Good Men Running It; That's the Only Way We'll Ever Be Safe."

THE DUTCHMAN'S LITTLE LESSON **R. V. Gery 136**
(A Novelette)
Wife Trouble—of All Things—Had Overtaken Makassar's Justly Dreaded Chief of Police

CURIODDITIES **Irwin J. Weill 157**

SHOTGUN DECISION **Homer King Gordon 158**
A Guilty Man Scared and Worried Hasn't Enough Will Power to Just Sit Tight

BLUE PETER (Verse) **William De Lisle 167**

THE SHOOTER'S CORNER **Pete Kuhlhoff 168**

THE STORY TELLERS' CIRCLE **169**

ENDS OF THE EARTH CLUB **172**

COVER—Edgar F. Wittmack

Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

Title registered in U. S. Patent Office PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

The entire contents of this magazine is protected by copyright and must not be reprinted. Copyright, 1941, by SHORT STORIES, INC.

GHOSTS OF TREES

Trees that suffer the agonies of the damned find a champion in the **Man Who Loved Planks**

This is the title of the definitely different fantasy novelette that leads off the March issue of that definitely different magazine — **WEIRD TALES.** In this story, crack fantasy author Malcolm Jameson creates a character who crusades in the cause of tragic forest dryads — the souls of trees. Read of the strange man who spends years piecing together three dimensional super jig-saw puzzles — the feminine beings who are half human and half ghost, and have stayed alive for centuries with their hands in one city, their feet in another, and their heads on a different continent. . . .

You're sure to enjoy *The Affair of the Shut Eye Medium* by H. Bedford-Jones. Here's another escapade of the Professional Corpse—this time an excursion into the spirit world!

There's humor in the Future — according to Nelson S. Bond in his story of Lancelot Biggs, master mind of the ether ways. There's a laugh at every line in *The Downfall of Lancelot Biggs.*

•

The whole issue is jammed tight with power plus nerve tingling yarns.

DO YOU "WAKE AND REMEMBER"?

When you meet a total stranger don't you sometimes get the feeling you've met him or her before some place, although you *know* it's impossible? Maybe you knew each other in a former life. . . . Such a feeling came to Mehitabel Goodrich when she peered through the peephole of the door that barred the young man's room, and it seemed as though a breeze laden with memories blew over her.

•

Seabury Quinn's *Wake and Remember* is drama that might have happened to you — that *may* happen to you!

•

For complete relaxation get a copy of
WEIRD TALES

It's the fireside vacation!

•

THE MARCH ISSUE
is on sale at your newsstand January 1st.

Weird Tales

THE MAGAZINE OF THE MYSTERIOUS - - - Price 15¢

ACCOUNTING
the profession that pays—

Accountants command good income. Thousands needed. About 20,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. Many earn $2,000 to $10,000. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeeping knowledge unnecessary—we prepare you from ground up. Our training is personally given by staff of experienced C. P. A.'s. Low cost—easy terms. Write now for valuable 48-page book free, "Accounting, the Profession That Pays."

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION Dept. 175H, Chicago

Lemon Juice Recipe Checks Rheumatic Pain Quickly

If you suffer from rheumatic or neuritis pain, try this simple inexpensive home recipe. Get a package of Ru-Ex Compound, a two week's supply, mix it with a quart of water, add the juice of 4 lemons. Often within 48 hours—sometimes overnight—splendid results are obtained. If the pains do not quickly leave you, return the empty package and Ru-Ex will cost you nothing to try. It is sold under an absolute money-back guarantee. Ru-Ex Compound is for sale by drug stores everywhere.

HOW GAMBLERS WIN

Twelve ways Professionals win with fair dice. No switching. No practice. One hundred keys and codes on twenty-four different backs. 50 cents. BEAT THE CHEAT, 28 pages of exposes, $1.00. The great OPEN BOOK, written in words of fire, 155 pages of exposes, $3.50. Free catalog included.
Box 2488 SPECIALTY EXPOSE Kansas City, Mo.

High School Raises Your Standards of { LIVING / TRAINING / INCOME

Many Finish in 2 Years

Finish High School at home, as FAST as time and ability permit. Equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college, pre-professional examinations, business, industry. Standard texts. Diploma. Credit for High School subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. American School, Chicago, est. 1897. FREE Bulletin. Write TODAY!

American School, Dept. H-139 Drexel Ave. at 58th St., Chicago
Send free information as checked below. No obligation.

— HIGH SCHOOL COURSE	— Air Conditioning
— Accounting and Auditing	— Diesel Engineering
— Architecture and Building	— Drafting and Design
— Automotive Engineering	— Liberal Arts
— Business Management	— Private Secretary
— Aviation	— Mechanical Engineering
— Electrical Engineering	— Radio and Television
— Electric and Gas Refrigeration	— Home Economics Courses

Name .....
Address .....

Promotion Begins at Home

KIDNEY TROUBLE

Stop Getting Up Nights

To harmlessly flush poisons and acid from kidneys and relieve irritation of bladder so that you can stop "getting up nights" get a 35 cent package of Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules and take as directed. Other symptoms of kidney and bladder weaknesses may be scant, burning or smarting passage — backache — leg cramps — puffy eyes. Get the original **GOLD MEDAL.** Don't accept a substitute.

ACTUAL FULL SIZE FOOD PRODUCTS YOURS FREE!

MAKE MONEY EASY WAY

To start you earning money quickly, I will give you Free my big Assortment of FOODS, GROCERIES, SOAPS, ETC.—Actual full size packages—worth $6.00! Yes, ABSOLUTELY FREE! You can become my Dealer in your town and "cash in" good money showing these products and taking orders from your friends and neighbors for 200 everyday necessities: Coffee, Tea, Spices, Soaps, Toilet Articles, Etc. It's easy, because my line is fine quality, good value, and I give valuable Premiums, amazing 1c Sales, and other Bargain Specials.

SEND NO MONEY Learn how you can earn money in full or spare time without experience, as Dealer for my vast line of quick selling necessities. I GIVE YOU CREDIT TOO! Here's your chance to go into a fine business of your own—and you don't pay me one cent to start. Rush your name and address NOW for my Assortment of actual, full size packages—ABSOLUTELY FREE! Act now.
ZANOL. 3623 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

WORK FOR THE

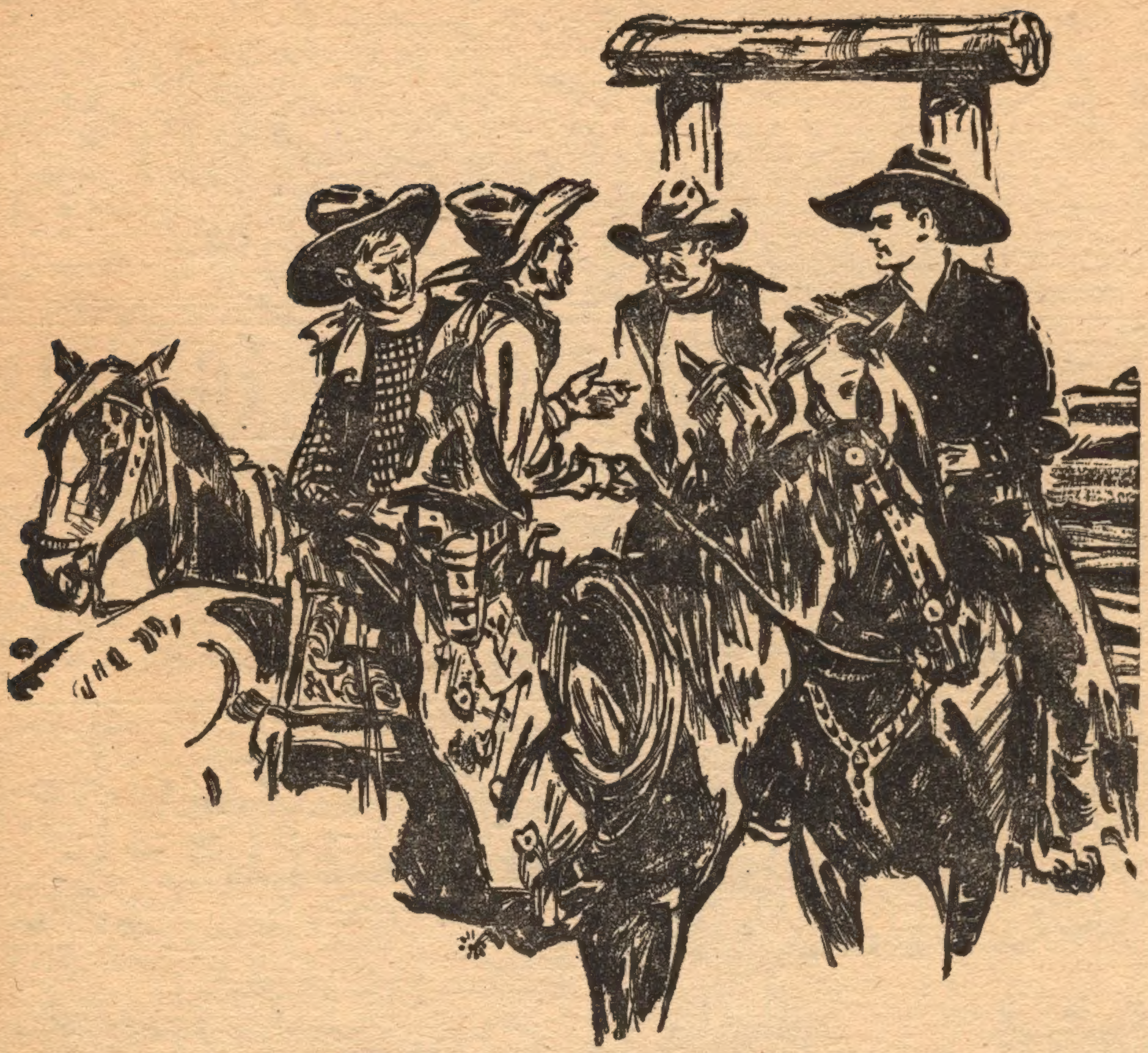
GOVERNMENT

START $1260 to $2100 YEAR
MEN—WOMEN
Mail Coupon Today SURE

COUPON

Franklin Institute, Dept. L239, Rochester, N.Y.
Sirs: Rush without charge (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government Jobs. (2) Tell me how to qualify for one of these jobs.
Name.....
Address.....

PLENTY ROPE



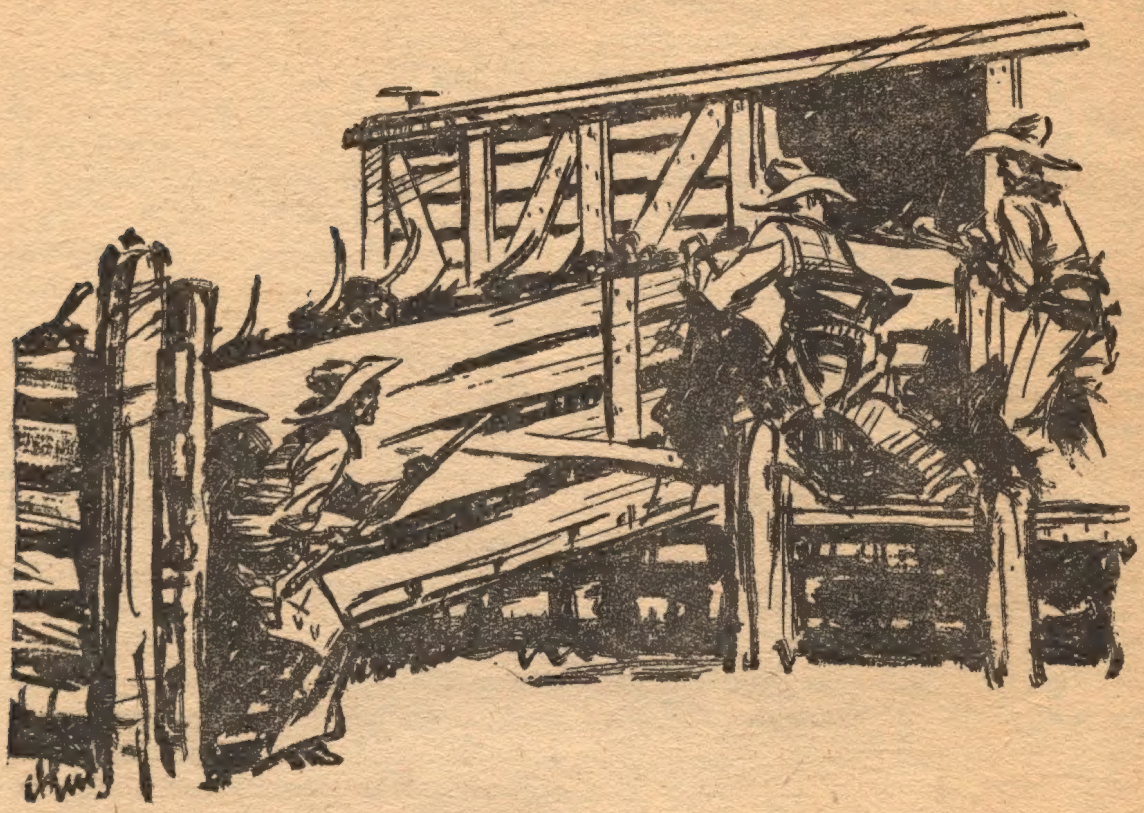
"We," Said Hashknife, "Are Just a Pair of Animated Targets, Going Around Waiting for Someone to Make a Bull's-eye of Us"

YOU will not find Remuda on the map. Its actual population is six, if you count the Chinaman. There is a depot, which is little more than a shack, a combined store, postoffice and saloon, and a loading corral. Passenger trains will stop on flag, or to discharge a passenger. As no one ever comes there, and no one goes away by rail, the passenger trains merely give a whistle, rattle past at sixty miles an hour, and shower Remuda with dust.

There are no trees in Remuda. A little green grass grows around the water-tank, where a certain amount is spilled when a freight engine fills the tank, but the rest of the landscape is desert-gray. A rutty old road comes in from the north, winding through the sage, while another road leaves the town and heads east along the tracks. The buildings of Remuda have been sand-scoured until not a vestige of paint remains, even the few signs in the little town are unreadable.

By W. C. TUTTLE

Author of the Many Dramatic Stories about Hashknife Hartley



Down this road from the north, crawling through a screen of dust, came a herd of cattle. The sun was low in the west, as they straggled into Remuda, where the dust-grimed cowboys checked them, threw them into a compact mass around some watering troughs, and prepared for the night.

Near the water-tank was the inevitable chuck-wagon, with the open fire, where two men prepared the evening meal. Horses were quickly unsaddled, bed-rolls tossed out on the ground. Darkness comes swiftly after sundown in the desert country. Despite the protestations of the depot agent that the railroad company wasn't furnishing baths for punchers, the dusty cowboys swung down the pipe of the water-tank and took turns in enjoying a shower bath, deluged by many gallons of luke-warm water.

"All you've got to do is pump some more, pardner," said Sleepy Stevens to the agent. "Shucks, you'd ought to thank us for givin' yuh somethin' to do. And," he added meaningly, "if yuh open yore mouth again, we'll hold yuh under that pipe until the darned tank is dry."

The agent retreated to his little office and the solace of his old corn-cob pipe. He knew cowboys, and that the statement was no idle remark. Hashknife Hartley sluiced off his six feet, three inches of long, whip-cord body, and climbed back into his clothes.

"Twenty-five miles more, pardner, and we'll be through with this here trail-herdin' job. Man, I've shore chewed a lot of dust this day."

"Shore have," agreed Sleepy, yawning a little.

"Them dogies will stay put tonight; so we'll all get some sleep. Gosh, that bath shore felt fine. Makes a new man out of yuh. Well, I reckon chuck is about ready, Hashknife."

It was dark, when they finished eating their supper. Most of the riders went over to the little saloon, but Hashknife and Sleepy spread their tarps against a pile of old ties, and sprawled out to smoke a cigarette.

"I don't mind tellin' yuh that I'll be glad when we get to the Box 88 and turn in these cows," remarked Sleepy. "This Bar V spread may be a *mucho buena* outfit, but I don't care much about it. You don't either."

Hashknife puffed slowly on his cigarette, the tiny light illuminating his lean, bronzed features. "Most of the boys are all right," he said.

"How about Tex?"

Tex Neeley, the foreman, was a tall, gaunt, saturnine person, addicted to snuff, long hair and an unshaved jaw.

"Queer sort of a hair-pin," said Hashknife quietly. "Can't quite figure him out. Snake-eyes and a hair-trigger temper. Packs a hair-trigger gun, too."

"I heard Bud Jones sayin' that yuh can cock that gun and give it a shake, and it'll go off," said Sleepy.

"Well," laughed Hashknife," he hasn't killed anybody that we know about, and we've been with the spread the best part of two months."

LEN HARRIS, representing the Box 88, saw the glow of cigarettes, and joined Hashknife and Sleepy. Len was a likeable cowboy. He hunkered down on the tie pile and rolled a smoke.

"Twenty-five miles more, and we'll quit eatin' dust," he said. "If I was you fellers I'd sure ask Tex Neeley for my pay—now. He's stakin' the boys to liquor and poker money, and he might be short, unless yuh dun him for yore pay."

"We ain't got much comin'," said Hashknife quietly. "If he can't pay us off in cash, I'll take his bridle and spurs. That hombre sure runs to silver, Len."

"Uh-huh, he sure does, Hartley. Why don't you two strike old man Carson for jobs on the Box 88? He's a fine cowman to work for, and you'd like the spread. If yuh like, I'll ask him. He can allus use a couple top-hands."

"Thank yuh a lot, Len," said Hashknife, "but me and Sleepy was plannin' to move along. 'Course, if Tex can't pay us off—we might have to take a job—until we can collect our wages."

"Len," said Sleepy, "you've knowed Tex longer than we have—what kind of a whippoorwill is he, anyway?"

Len puffed thoughtfully for several moments. Finally he said:

"Sleepy, when Carson bought these five hundred head of cows from the Bar V, he sent me over here to see that the herd got to the Box 88."

"That's what I thought. We don't like him either."

Len chuckled quietly. "Most folks don't. When I'm around him, my shoulder-blades kinda itch to get up against somethin' solid. But I git along with anybody. I don't argue. Shucks, life's too short. Yuh notice that Tex didn't take a bath with the rest of us, didn't yuh? I'll bet he ain't had one since he quit wearin' three-cornered pants."

Some of the boys started singing over at the saloon, already showing the effects of Remuda whiskey.

"Did Carson pay cash at the Bar V for these cows?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah, he did, Hartley; and he paid a good price. They're good stuff, all hand-picked. That was my job. The old man's got an idea of improvin' his herd. Last year he bought six white-faced bulls in Wyomin', and man, what he paid for them bulls! I could buy me a ranch for that much money.

"There's allus been a quarrel between Carson and 'Cash' Evans, as to which one had the best bred cattle. Evans owns the IE spread. They tell me that Evans is dang near blind now. A Mexican took a shot at him at his ranch one day, and the bullet affected one of his eyes. He spent

a lot of money, trying to save the sight of that eye, but it wasn't any use. Now, I hear that the other eye is almost gone. Evans is a real nice old rannihan, but with the temper of the devil."

"What," queried Sleepy, "happened to the Mexican?"

"I jist don't rightly know, Sleepy. He quit usin' around the valley. Listen to them saddle-slickers sing over at the saloon. How about goin' over and take a look at things? They tell me that Pete Coverly, the owner of the saloon, was run out of Nevada for breedin' extra aces in decks of cards, and dealin' seconds. Our gang will prob'ly be as clean as an angel's wings by mornin'."

Shorty Allen, the chuck-wagon cook, was finishing up his dishes, and Sleepy called to him, asking if he was going over to the saloon.

"Not me," answered the old cook. "I'm hittin' the hay early."

Most of the herd was lying down, perfectly willing to take it easy, after a day of traveling in the heat and dust. There was no moon. A long, mixed-freight train rattled and clanked out of the desert, and rumbled away, its tail-lights bobbing like red fire-flies through the mesquite and sage.

Hashknife, Sleepy and Len wandered over to the saloon, a long, rather narrow interior. Two tables of draw poker were filled, and several men squabbled over a dingy pool-table, the cushions of which had long since lost their elasticity. In fact there was only one cue with a tip; so each contestant had to use the same cue.

Tex Neeley was at the bar, arguing with the bartender over the brand of liquor dispensed in Remuda, when Hashknife, Sleepy and Len entered. Tex reached into a hip-pocket and drew out a wallet.

"If you fellers are short, I'll fix yuh up," he offered. "A feller hates to be in a place like this and not have any money. How much yuh need?"

"Well," drawled Hashknife, "the Bar V owes me and Sleepy thirty dollars apiece, and one day yet to go. Why not pay us off, and trust to luck that we'll stick to the job?"

"Well, yeah, I—I reckon I can fix yuh up. Thirty apiece, eh? Shore. Here yuh are. Here's yore money, Sleepy. Now I'll buy a drink. C'mon, Len, have a shot of the worst liquor in Arizona."

Hashknife and Sleepy excused themselves with the statement that it was too soon after supper to drink bad liquor, and went over to look at the poker games. One game threatened to break up for lack of patronage, but Tex Neeley took a chair, and Hashknife decided to try his luck, too.

SLEEPY got into the pool game, at which game he was an addict and more or less of an expert. But the uneven table, slow cushions and out-of-shape balls made all the players equal. The rest of the cowboys drank heavily, whooped with mirth at every missed shot, and tore fresh holes in the table cover.

Hashknife's luck was very good, and within an hour the game broke up for lack of funds, only one game going, with the proprietor, Pete Coverly, whom Len had said was run out of Nevada for crooked dealing. One of the five players dropped out, and Hashknife took his seat.

"Fresh blood in the game," smiled Coverly. "I don't reckon I've ever met you, pardner."

Hashknife looked straight at Coverly. Few men ever looked straight into Hashknife's eyes and ever forgot him. The level stare of those clear, gray eyes seemed to go far below the surface.

"His name's Hartley," offered Bud Jones. "Mr. Coverly, Mr. Hartley."

"How do yuh do, Mr. Coverly," said Hashknife coldly.

"Well, I reckon I do all right," drawled Coverly. "Hartley, eh? Seems like I've heard that name before."

"Common enough name," said Hashknife, fingering his chips. Coverly's brow

furrowed with thought as he picked up the cards.

"Names ain't got anythin' to do with poker," said Tex Neeley.

"Mebbe," suggested Bud Jones, "this here town of Remuda is gettin' so stylish that they don't deal cards to a man unless they've done met him socially."

"You don't *happen* to be Hashknife Hartley, do yuh?" queried Coverly.

"Anythin' might happen in Arizona," replied Hashknife.

"Yeah—reckon so," agreed Coverly, and began shuffling the cards.

"Now that we all know each other, suppose somebody puts in an ante," suggested Bud Jones. "I find me a poker game oncet a year, and somebody takes up all the time gettin' acquainted."

"You been doin' all right, Bud?" asked Hashknife.

"I've been doin' all right by everybody but me. If yuh ain't never hear of Santa Claus playin' poker, you watch me, Hashknife."

Hashknife paid little attention to the play of others, but he did keep an eye on Coverly. He could pit his luck against the others, but it needed more than luck to beat Coverly. After one deal, in which Hashknife did not play, he bunched the cards and requested another deck.

"What's the matter with the cards?" asked Coverly bluntly.

"'Course, you know," replied Hashknife easily, "it may be the way they're makin' cards these days, but I don't like the tiny, little bumps they're puttin' on aces and face-cards. Like this one—see it?"

He held the card over to Tex. In the two corners, upper right and lower left were the unmistakable marks made by a finger or thumbnail. They were barely noticeable, but easy to detect with a sensitive finger.

"I dunno what the hell yo're talkin' about!" snorted Coverly, examining a card. "Any deck—"

"Bring us new cards!" yelled Bud Jones.

"I don't see anythin' wrong with 'em," declared Tex.

"I like mine smooth," said Hashknife.

ANOTHER deck was brought, but the seal had been broken. Tex dealt the hand, and Hashknife won a pot worth about five dollars. Coverly, very thoughtful, watched the fall of the cards on Hashknife's deal. No one opened the pot, and the deal passed to Johnny West. Coverly passed out of the pot, which was won by Bud Jones. On Bud's deal, no one opened and the deal went to Coverly.

"To hell with this penny-ante stuff," growled Coverly. "Let's make it a real pot. Ten dollar ante and ten to open."

He looked at Hashknife and said, "All right with you, Hartley?"

Hashknife smiled and shook his head. "Not unless you've got another deck around here that *ain't* been opened, Coverly."

"That ain't been— Wait a minute. You've played a round of deals with this deck; why balk now?"

Hashknife slid back a little in his seat, his hands lowering.

"It happens to be yore deal, Coverly—and I like my cards off the top of the deck."

Their eyes met, clashed, and Coverly shifted. One hand started to close over the deck, but pulled away.

"I'll be a dirty name!" whispered Bud Jones. "Off the top. Why damn it, I—what's this all about?"

"I don't get what yuh mean, Hartley," said Tex.

"Coverly does," replied Hashknife Hartley coldly. "Show 'em how it's done, Coverley—or shall I show 'em. I learned it from a sleight-of-hand performer, who got shot, usin' it in a poker game."

The saloon was silent. From far off came the wailing whistle of a train. Sleepy said, "I wonder why a train would stop here."

"How do yuh know?" asked one of the boys.

"The engineer answered the signal from back in the train."

Coverly shoved back from the table and walked to the bar.

"I'll buy a drink for everybody," he announced. "Game's closed."

"And me, sunk like the Hesperus," sighed Bud Jones. "I still don't sabe about them bumps on the cards. Will yuh show me how it's done sometime, Hashknife?"

"No, Bud," replied Hashknife gravely. "It don't pay—for long."

Coverly was busily engaged in putting out the glasses. Sleepy was watching him closely, expecting that he might come up with a sawed-off shotgun, instead of bottles of liquor. They heard the passenger train grind to a stop.

"It did stop," said one of the men. "Water—mebbe."

Then came the heavy exhaust, as the engine surged ahead, and almost at the same time came the unmistakable sound of a shot. The men in the saloon looked questioningly at each other. There were no more shots.

"Shore sounded like a shot," remarked Len Harris.

"Mebbe," suggested Bud Jones, "the depot agent shot at the engineer for wakin' him up. Yuh know how he acted about us takin' a bath."

"He's ornery enough to do that," said another.

Len Harris walked to the doorway and looked toward the depot. There was a light in the little office. Len came back to the bar and picked up his glass.

"Can't see any commotion," he remarked dryly.

"Commotion!" snorted Bud Jones. "In this town? Well, here's to yuh."

"Speakin' of marked cards," remarked Johnny West, "I heard—"

"Who spoke of marked cards?" interrupted Tex Neeley.

"Well," said Johnny apologetically, "I don't reckon anybody did."

"Then drop it," growled Tex.

Coverly seemed relieved. "Fill 'em up again, boys," he invited.

"Feller would have to have a sensitive skin on his finger," said Bud Jones absently. "No, I reckon it'd have to be on his thumb."

"What the hell are you mumblin' about?" demanded Tex Neeley.

"Nothin'—I was just thinkin', Tex."

Someone stumbled on the wooden porch, and they turned toward the door to see the depot-agent, bareheaded, wide-eyed, breathing heavily.

"Why don'tcha do somethin'?" he demanded. "Standin' here, swillin' whiskey! Don'tcha know that a man has been killed?"

"Who got killed?" asked Tex quickly.

"How'd I know? Didn't yuh hear that shot? Well, I did. Folks don't shoot around here—not unless they mean it; so I took my lantern and went lookin'. He's over there, layin' against the far end of my platform."

"Dead?" asked Coverly.

"Well, if he ain't he's sure a hell of a good actor. Come on; don't stand there and goggle at me!"

The crowd surged from the saloon and made their way over to the depot, where the agent had left his lantern beside the body.

"I ask yuh—ain't that a mess?" he queried. "Gawd!"

THE man, slender, well-dressed, had been shot in the face with a shotgun, obliterating any chance of identification. The men, after one glance, drew back, looking at each other in the lantern-light. Hashknife knelt beside the body and quickly made a search of the pockets. Then he took the lantern and examined the dirt around the body.

"Find anythin'?" asked Len Harris weakly.

Hashknife shook his head. "This man was robbed," he said. "Nothin' in any of his pockets. He had a valise—but that's gone. Yuh can see the marks in the dust, where it stood."

"A regular detective, eh?" remarked Coverly.

"You might examine him and see what *you* find," suggested Hashknife.

"Not me. What's to be done about it?"

"Well, we can't leave him here," replied Hashknife. "You boys can all witness where he laid, in case the coroner asks questions. How long will it take to get the sheriff, Coverly?"

"Well, it's twenty-five miles over to Tonto Wells, and the road is just about like you came over today. Take about four, five hours to get over there."

"Somebody get a tarp. We'll stack him in the depot baggage room."

The agent grumbled and cursed, but to no avail.

They put the corpse in the little baggage room and covered it carefully. The next question was—who would notify the sheriff.

Hashknife said, "How about sendin' Bud Jones and Johnny West?"

"And short-hand my outfit?" queried Tex. "No chance."

"We've got more men than we need," declared Hashknife. "Johnny, you and Bud head for Tonto Wells."

"I'm runnin' this outfit," reminded Tex.

"All right," said Hashknife. "In that case, we'll hold the cattle here, until Johnny and Bud get back. This is murder, Tex, and if I was in yore place I'd kinda hesitate on refusin' to notify the sheriff."

"Oh, all right," growled Tex.

"I'm goin' to enjoy this," declared Bud Jones. "Old Doc MacLarey, the coroner, won't ride a horse; so Buck Foley, the sheriff, will ride with him in a buckboard. And over that road!"

"What have you got against Doc MacLarey?" asked Tex.

"I ain't got nothin' against Doc, but I shore hanker to git even with Buck. The last time I was over at Tonto Wells, Buck arrested me for disturbin' the peace, and fined me five dollars. Imagine that—disturbin' the peace in Tonto Wells! And all I done was shoot two holes in a beer sign."

"What was behind the beer sign, Bud?" asked Len Harris.

"Buck Foley," replied Bud. "C'mon, Johnny."

The two young cowboys went to saddle their mounts, while the rest of the men went back to the saloon. When the horses were saddled, Bud said:

"Let's see if Shorty left any coffee in the pot, Johnny. It might act as an antidote to that Remuda whiskey. Man, that stuff is awful raw."

"What did yuh think about Hashknife callin' the turn on Coverly?"

"It shore looked like trouble for a minute," chuckled Bud. "Coverly is supposed to be a tough hombre, but he caved complete. Didja ever have Hashknife look square at yuh, Johnny? There's a feller to tie onto."

"Yeah, you bet," agreed Johnny. "See if yuh can find a couple cups."

Carefully Bud started a search of the chuck-wagon, well knowing the temper of Shorty Allen, the old cook, when anyone invaded his premises. Bud found the tin cups and had started back to the coffee pot, when he heard a grunting, rustling noise under the chuck-wagon. Johnny heard it too, and said:

"Sounded like a razor-back hawg, Bud. What the hell is it, anyway?"

Bud had crouched down against the wagon, and now he called back:

"By golly it's Shorty! Well, I'll be a hop-toad, if he ain't all tied up! C'mere, Johnny!"

Johnny lighted the lantern and together they dragged the cook from under the buckboard and untied him. He had been gagged with a piece of his own flour-sack apron, and on the side of his head was a

lump nearly as big as half an egg. But Shorty was conscious and plenty mad.

"It shore as hell took you fellers a long time to find me," he complained. "A feller could die around here, and never git help. What happened, anyway?"

"Study that'n, will yuh?" said Johnny. "We find him all packed up for shipment, and with a door-knob on the side of his head — and he asks *us* what happened. Ain't you got no ideas on it, Shorty?"

"You seen the shape I was in," wailed the cook. "Mouth full of old Four X flour sack, hands and feet tied. Say, how the hell do yuh reckon I could know much what was goin' on?"

"You was asleep, when they patted yuh on the head, eh?" said Bud.

"I wasn't no such a damn thing, Bud, I was stretched out on my bed-roll, smokin' a good-night cigarette, when a couple fellers rode up close to the wagon. Well, I wasn't goin' to cook no more grub today; so I gets me up and go over to 'em. One of 'em was off his horse. I says:

" 'Lookin' for somebody'?"

"And they was," finished Johnny.

"Mebbe so," agreed the cook. "Anyway, one of 'em grunted somethin', as I come up to him, and I says, 'If yo're lookin' for the boss, he's over at the saloon. If yo're lookin' for the cook—he ain't here."

"And then they knocked on yore head," said Johnny.

"You don't even need a crystal ball," groaned Shorty. "I reckon they kinda scared the cows, 'cause later I heard 'em movin' around."

"Didja hear any shots fired?" asked Bud.

"Shots? No, I didn't. Was they some shootin' done?"

"Yeah. Man got off the train and somebody blasted him in the face with a shotgun. We packed the poor devil away in the depot, and me and Johnny are on our way over to Tonto Wells to git the sheriff. You better go over and tell Tex what happened to yuh."

"A hell of a lot of good that'll do. Them drunken rannihans might try to unscrew the knob off my head. It's sore's a b'il. Nope. I'll jist take a snort from my own private bottle, and go to bed—to hell with Tex."

"We'll have a shot of coffee, and git goin'," said Johnny.

"I'll have a shot with yuh. A man got killed, eh? Shot in the face with a shotgun. Shucks, I got off lucky. A cup of coffee will take the taste of that dirty rag out of my mouth."

"Why don'tcha wash yore danged aprons once in awhile?" asked Bud.

"From this on, I'm shore goin' to wear clean ones. A feller never does know what'll happen in Arizony."

IT WAS nine o'clock next morning, when the sheriff and coroner came to Remuda, riding in a light wagon. Buck Foley was a little man, forty-five years of age; a thin-faced little Irishman, with small, blue eyes, very little hair and a trace of brogue. Doctor MacLarey was six feet, four inches tall, bony and knock-kneed. He was older than Foley, dour of countenance, but with a twinkle in his deep-set blue eyes.

It had been a hard trip over that rutty road, and Foley had not spared the team. The doctor groaned and flexed his muscles.

"I warned Foley that instead of one dead man we'd have three to haul back—and we'd be the other two," he declared.

"There's Old Shorty Allen, wearin' his hat cocked on the side of his head," laughed the sheriff. "Puttin' on airs, eh?"

"Take a look at that bump—and call it airs," flared the cook.

"Toosh!" exclaimed MacLarey. "Ye are a hard-lookin' crew. Might we take a look at the corpse?"

An examination of the dead man disclosed nothing. Hashknife explained the position of the dead man, when they discovered him, and the others corroborated the explanation. Foley questioned Tex

about his men, but all of them, with the exception of Shorty, the cook, had been in the saloon when the shot was fired.

"The poor devil was close to the muzzle," said the doctor. "There's gun wads in his flesh. By his hands, he was not a worker, and his teeth were all in good shape. I'd say he was fairly young."

"Good clothes," added Hashknife.

"Aye—very good. You say he had a valise?"

"There were marks made by the bottom of a valise in the dust near the body."

The sheriff interrogated the depot agent, who said that the passenger train stopped for a moment. Evidently the train had barely started, when the shot was fired. The agent, curious about the shot, dressed and took a lantern from his room, after which he made a search and found the body.

They wrapped the body in a tarpaulin and placed it in the bed of the wagon. Shorty prepared breakfast for the sheriff and coroner, while the cowboys got ready for the twenty-five mile drive over to Tonto Wells.

Hashknife was saddling his horse, when Len Harris rode over to him. Len's face was grim, as he said:

"We're goin' to string out the herd and make a rough count, Hashknife."

"A rough count? What's wrong, Len?"

"We're shy a bunch of cows. I tell yuh, we ain't got no five hundred head in that bunch."

Tex swung in past the loading corral and reined over to talk with the sheriff at the chuck-wagon, when Len called him over.

"We're stringin' the herd and makin' a count, Tex," he said.

"What for?" asked Tex curiously.

"To find out how many cows have left the herd since last evenin', Tex."

"Left the herd? I don't git what yuh mean."

"We'll count 'em. They've got to make that turn on the other side of the saloon, and down along that fence. Hartley and Stevens will make the tally. Tell the boys to string 'em out and move 'em easy."

"All right—sure. If yuh think there's any missin'."

THE sheriff walked over from the chuck-wagon, asking if anything was wrong.

"No, everythin' is all right," said Tex. "Len insists on a count."

"I'm a pretty good guesser on bunched cows," declared Len, "and if there's five hundred head in that bunch, I'll eat my own rope."

"There's got to be," smiled Tex. "We left with five hundred day before yesterday."

"Anyway," said Len, "we make a count right now."

It was not a difficult matter to make the count, as the cows were well strung out,

unhurried, and were obliged to pass through a fairly narrow space. When the last cow went past, Hashknife and Sleepy met at the rear of the herd, with Len and Tex.

"I make it three hundred and ninety-seven," stated Hashknife.

"Mebbe I missed one," grinned Sleepy. "My tally was three hundred and ninety-six."

Len made a mental calculation. "We're shy a hundred and three, Tex."

"I'll be a damn liar if I can figure that out!" snorted Tex. "How on earth was it done—and who'd do it?"

"Not so hard," said Hashknife. "While we were in the saloon, a bunch of riders could move in quietly and work a hundred cows loose from that herd. And they'd have all the rest of the night to get 'em out of sight. Yuh must remember that Shorty Allen was tied up and gagged, and

he was the only one who could have discovered the rustlers."

"But who in hell would ever think of guardin' the herd right here in Remuda?" asked Tex. "Mebbe I'm to blame."

"Mebbe," suggested Len, "the Bar V will make 'em good."

"I wouldn't count on it," said Tex quickly.

"I'm not."

"Do yuh want me and Sleepy to ride point today?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah," nodded Tex, and they spurred away, riding on opposite sides of the herd.

The sheriff, coroner and the corpse were far ahead of the herd, kicking up a cloud of dust. There was a little wind, which helped to keep the dust rolling, instead of boiling up and settling back.

Out on the point of that herd, Hashknife had plenty chance to think over the events of the past night. It would be difficult to prove that Tex Neeley had any hand in the rustling of the cows, but Hashknife had deep suspicions. As for the murdered man, Hashknife had no theory, but he did hate to see the Box 88 lose over a hundred head of good cows.

They were a queer pair, Hashknife Hartley and Sleepy Stevens. Products of the Northwest ranges, they had drifted in to the Southwest, meeting for the first time on the big cattle spread which gave Hashknife his nickname. They were both of the breed that won't stand still, drifters, always looking for things that might be on the other side of a hill.

Neither of them had much school education. Bread-earning started them both out in life too early for that, but experience had been a good teacher. Hashknife had been born with an analytical brain, which he had developed through many experiences in solving range mysteries, until their services were in continuous demand by cattle associations and private interests. But they did not like to work under orders. Remuneration meant little to them. All they wanted was plenty of food, a place to sleep, and an occasional new shirt or overalls. They rarely stayed more than a month on any job, because there was always the urge to keep going, seeking new hills to cross, new problems to face.

Death had struck at them many times. Their calling made them marked men, and each success as range detectives made them more enemies among the men who ride outside the law. Sleepy did not analyze things. He was content to follow his leader, knowing that when trouble broke his gun would be ready. Herding those Box 88 cows to Tonto Wells would mean the end of their employment with the Bar V. When they worked for an outfit, they worked harder than any man on the job, because, as Sleepy said:

"It's so doggone good to loaf, after you've worked mighty hard."

Someone dubbed them, "Soldiers of Fortune," but Sleepy denied the appellation.

"We ain't soldiers, and we'll never have a fortune," he said. "We're Cowpunchers of Disaster."

And from the edge of the rim, about ten miles from Remuda, they could see the lower reaches of the Tonto Wells range, with the cobalt hills far beyond. Hashknife stood up in his stirrups and waved his sombrero at Sleepy, far on the other side. Sleepy waved back, while between them drifted the strung-out herd, bawling in the dust and almost obliterated.

TONTO WELLS proved to be a typical cattle town, but prosperous. Three large, free-milling gold mines, twenty miles from town, outfitted there, and the crews came there to spend their money. It was twenty miles north to the railroad and the town of Cinnibar, which was not as large as Tonto Wells.

There was a stage every other day from Cinnibar, over a road that was not built for speed. After the cattle were delivered to the Box 88, Hashknife and Sleepy were free to do as they pleased; so they pleased to get acquainted with Tonto Wells.

In order to have the Bar V cowboys testify, the sheriff ordered the inquest at once, at which time nothing developed. No one was able to identify the remains, nor to advance any theory as to who had fired the fatal shot. The body was buried at the county's expense, and the sheriff sighed over the fact that another unsolved murder was added to the list.

He assured Len Harris that everything possible would be done to apprehend those guilty of stealing the cattle. But Ed Carson, owner of the Box 88, was not satisfied with promises. After hearing Len's story, he absolved Len from all blame. Len found Hashknife and Sleepy and introduced them to Ed Carson. The owner of the Box 88 was a hard-bitted old cowman, big-hearted and generous, but with a bitter hatred against horse and cattle thieves.

"I ain't sayin' that Tex Neeley had any hand in it," he told Hashknife, "but the thing looked like it had been set. Tex handed the boys plenty money at Remuda, knowin' danged well they'd forget the cattle."

"How could anyone dispose of a hundred head of Bar V cows?" asked Hashknife.

"How about takin' 'em back to the Bar V?" queried Carson. "I didn't have any mark on 'em, Hartley."

"Yeah, they could have done that. Six hours drive from Remuda would have put 'em into those brushy hills, where they would scatter. There's water back there, and they could have eased 'em along to the Bar V range. But, Carson, I don't believe that's the answer."

"Yuh don't? Why?"

"Me and Sleepy worked two months for the Bar V, and I don't believe Bob Vincent has a single crooked bone in his body. I know it looks bad, when a man demands cash for cattle, before delivery, and his foreman loses a hundred head on a three-day drive. I'm not makin' any speeches for Tex Neeley, but I'd hate to be that badly fooled on Bob Vincent."

"Mebbe you can figure a better theory, Hartley," smiled Carson.

"Well, I'd have to know a lot more about people and conditions around here, before I'd make any guesses, Mr. Carson."

"I can use a couple good men on the Box 88."

"Well, that's generous of yuh," smiled Hashknife. "Mebbe we'll stick around a few days, before takin' a job. Has there been any rustlin' done around here lately?"

"Not from my outfit. If yuh want to believe Cash Evans, he's bein' rustled to death. Poor devil's blind as a bat, but won't admit it."

"I heard some of the boys talkin' about him. Big spread?"

"Yeah, pretty big. Used to be a wild sort of devil, but he's tame now. Had a fine wife and two little kids, but busted up with 'em. That was fifteen, sixteen years ago. Jist about threw 'em out of the country. But after his eyes began gettin' dim I reckon he repented, and kinda wanted his family.

"But his wife was dead. He got his son and daughter back again. Girl's about nineteen, and the boy is about twenty-one. Mebbe they can cheer him up—I dunno. Doc MacClarey says he don't reckon Old Cash is goin' to live long, worryin' about himself. I feel sorry for the old boy."

"And yuh say he's losin' cattle?" queried Hashknife.

"So he says. Rants about it most of the time. I talked with Foley about it, but Foley don't believe it. Ed Small, his foreman, says that it's a fact that they're losin' cattle."

"They ought to know," smiled Hashknife. "Thanks for the offer of a job, Mr. Carson; we may take yuh up on it."

Hashknife and Sleepy went down to the sheriff's office, where they met John Henry Pine, known as Lonesome, the deputy sheriff. Lonesome was rather tall, gangling, with a thin face and inquiring eyes. His hair was blond, and badly in need of barbering.

"I ain't much of a hand to talk," he told them, "but I'm glad to meetcha. Buck was a-tellin' me that yuh came over with a herd from the Bar V. I used to work for the Bar V myself."

"You didn't work, and that's why Bob Vincent fired yuh," said Buck Foley, the sheriff. "Tex Neeley told me about it."

"Tex told yuh?" queried Lonesome soberly. "How the hell'd he know, he was too lazy to watch and see if I worked. However, I drawed three paydays from 'em, and won sixty dollars from that gang at draw poker."

"What about that poker game at Remuda, Hartley?" asked Foley. "Tex said somethin' about you makin' Pete Coverly crawl."

"There wasn't any crawlin' done," grinned Hashknife. "I just didn't like his cards, and asked him to show the boys how to deal seconds."

"He's a bad boy," said Lonesome. " 'S a wonder he didn't jump yuh."

"Another thing," added the sheriff, "Tex said somethin' about you bein' sort of a range detective. He said that Coverly told him a few things he'd heard."

"Would anybody believe Pete Coverly?" countered Hashknife.

"I know damn well, I wouldn't," said Lonesome quickly.

A man walked into the office, stopping in the doorway. He was tall and broad, square-faced, heavy-jawed, slightly gray.

"Hyah, Jeff," greeted the sheriff. "How's things?"

"All right, Buck. Hyah, Lonesome?"

"Purty good," grinned the deputy. "Mr. Beaudry, I'd like to have yuh meet Mr. Hartley and Mr. Stevens. Mr. Beaudry," Lonesome hastened to explain, "is the owner of the Quarter-Circle JNB spread."

JEFF BEAUDRY shook hands with Hashknife and Sleepy.

"I heard about yuh comin' in with them cows for the Box 88," said Beaudry, "and seen yuh at the inquest. What was this I hear about yuh losin' a hundred head of cows at Remuda?"

"Well," smiled Hashknife, "we had five hundred, when we came in, but we only counted three hundred and ninety-seven, when we pulled out."

"That sounds impossible," declared Beaudry.

"That's right," nodded Hashknife. "Mighty queer. Somebody knocked out the cook, and tied him up, and somebody blew the head off a man who got off the passenger train—all in one night."

"And," said Lonesome, "in a town where only three votes was cast last election."

"I dunno," sighed the sheriff. "Cash Evans is always wailin' that he's bein' robbed of cows, and now somebody grabs over a hundred from the Box 88."

"That gives you a job, Buck," said Beaudry.

"Yeah—a hell of a job. I don't even know where to start."

"How's Cash Evans' eyes comin' along?" asked Beaudry.

"They ain't comin' along," replied the sheriff. "He's plumb blind, but won't admit it. A hell of a thing, ain't it, Jeff?"

"It shore is. Buck. I feel awful sorry for Cash. Me and him ain't never been real friends, but that don't matter. I'd like to help him, but I don't know how I could do it."

"Leave him alone," advised the sheriff. "Cash don't want sympathy. He's got his two kids back, and he's satisfied. I don't know how they'll take to this kind of life, after livin' in a city—but that's their problem. I've seen the girl once and the boy's been in town a couple times. He's kinda wild. The girl is real pretty."

"How did he locate 'em?" asked Beaudry.

"Oh, Cal Parks, the lawyer, has kinda kept track of 'em. He knew that Mrs. Evans was dead, but he didn't tell Cash, until after Cash wanted to get his family back. Naturally, the kids will get the

ranch and the money, when Cash passes on. It stands to reason that Cash has money."

"Not in any bank," smiled Beaudry.

"Nope," agreed the sheriff. "He didn't trust banks. I dunno where he's got it, but it must be a lot of hard money. I reckon he's got it all in his will. Cal Parks is awful close-mouthed, even for a lawyer, and he's been a friend to Cash Evans for a good many years."

"Yeah, they've been pretty good friends," agreed Beaudry.

"How's business?" asked Lonesome.

"Well, pretty fair," replied the owner of the Quarter Circle JNB. "Nothin' excitin', but steady. It keeps two men pretty busy, killin', skinnin' and haulin'. Of course, on contract stuff thataway, you have to shave the price pretty close. You'll be out tomorrow, Buck?"

"I'll be out, or I'll send Lonesome, Jeff."

After Beaudry left the office, Hashknife said, "Beaudry sells meat to all three mines, eh?"

"That's right," nodded the sheriff. "Damn nuisance for us, too, 'cause we have to check on the hides. We get a report from the mines on the amount of meat, which has to check with the hides. We mark the hides; so there's no chance to cheat on 'em, and when Jeff ships, hides, he gives us a tally of the number, and we see that they're all marked."

"Well, that kinda gives Beaudry a clean bill," remarked Hashknife.

"Oh, shore; he couldn't be crooked if he wanted to, Hartley. Every hide has to show the JNB brand, and as well as we know Jeff Beaudry, we check every damn hide."

"He seems like a real nice sort of a feller," observed Sleepy.

"Jeff Beaudry is all right," said the sheriff. "Square as a dollar."

THAT evening Hashknife and Sleepy talked things over in their room. Their horses were completely rested, and there did not seem to be any reason for staying any longer in Tonto Wells. Sleepy seemed relieved, as he said:

"I seen yore nose twitchin' a couple times, and I was kinda scared you'd want to mix into this rustlin' situation. 'Course, there's no way to figure out who got them Bar V cows, and that murder at Remuda looks like a closed case."

"That was kinda queer," mused Hashknife. "I wonder why that man got off at a Godforsaken place like Remuda—and who met him with a shotgun? It was sure intentional. That man was told to get off there, and that man who told him—or his hired gunman—was there to meet him. It don't seem to tie in with the rustlers, except that it might have been the men who stole them cows, and who tiedup Shorty Allen, the cook. Yeah, it's sort of a queer thing."

"We could go south," suggested Sleepy. "Them blue hills look kinda interestin'."

"Must be close to the Border," said Hashknife. "We'll ask questions tomorrow."

They brought their war-bags down to the hotel desk next morning, paid their bill and went to breakfast, intending to ride south, when the hotel keeper came to their table in the dining-room."

"Cash Evans is in his buckboard out in front," he told them, "and he wants to see Mr. Hartley, as soon as he's had breakfast."

"Tell him we'll be through in a few minutes," said Hashknife. Sleepy groaned and shook his head.

"Coffee too hot?" smiled Hashknife.

"Shucks!" snorted Sleepy. "While yo're talkin' with Evans, I'll take the war-bags up to the room."

"I wouldn't do that Sleepy."

"You don't know you as well as I do," replied Sleepy. "You go out and talk with Mr. Evans, while I go and buy a new box of forty-five shells."

Cash Evans was alone in his buckboard, sitting stiffly on the seat. He was of me-

dium size, grizzled, his face deeply lined. Hashknife walked to the buckboard, and the blind man smiled.

"Yo're Hashknife Hartley?" he asked quietly.

"Yeah, that's my name, Mr. Evans," replied Hashknife.

"Good! Climb up here with me, will yuh."

Hashknife sat down with him.

"Yo're pretty tall," said Evans. "Funny how yuh figure things out, when yuh can't see. Oh, my eyes ain't plumb gone, 'cause I can tell the difference between daylight and dark. Prob'ly won't last long. Hartley, don't get the idea that I'm askin' for sympathy. Never did—never will."

"Why," queried Hashknife, "did you come to see me, Mr. Evans?"

"Name's Cash, Hartley. At least, that's what they call me. Well, you know Bob Marsh, don't yuh? I know yuh do. Well, about two weeks ago I got a letter from Bob. He said there was just one man he felt could help me, and that man was you. He said he didn't have any idea where you were."

"Who told you I was here?"

"Len Harris. He was tellin' me about havin' a hundred head of cows stolen from him at Remuda. Got to tellin' about a cowwaddie that made Pete Coverly tuck in his shirt, and mentioned yore name. Said you was here in Tonto Wells; so me and Ed Small, my foreman, rode in to find yuh. Hartley, I'm bein' robbed, and I can't make the law believe me."

Hashknife nodded slowly. "Cash," he said quietly, "I don't believe this is the place to talk it over. We'll shake hands, and I'll leave yuh. Me and Sleepy will be out to yore place later. Every eye in this town is upon us."

"I never thought of that, Hartley. Sure, yo're right; and I'll sure be lookin' for yuh. Well, let's shake."

They shook hands, and Hashknife went back into the hotel. In a few minutes Ed Small came back and they drove out of town. Hashknife joined Sleepy in the hotel. Nothing was said about the talk with Evans. They merely looked at each other. The old hotel keeper said:

"Glad you boys are stayin' a few days longer."

A man came into the hotel, and the clerk said, "Howdy, Mr. Parks."

"Good morning, William." He turned to Hashknife and said, "You are Mr. Hartley?"

"That's my name," replied Hashknife. "You are Cal Parks, the lawyer?"

"Well! You've heard of me, it seems."

CAL PARKS, lawyer and close friend of Cash Evans, was a small man, thin-faced, rather hawk-eyed and partly bald. He wore stiff-bosom white shirts, stringy tie, rusty-black suit and elastic-top shoes. The stiff, barrel-shaped cuffs were far too large for his skinny wrists.

"Did yuh want to see me?" asked Hashknife.

"If you have a few minutes to spare, I'd like to have you come over to my office—both of you."

"Yuh better watch him," chuckled the hotel keeper. "These lawyers are pretty smart. I've got a little safe, where yuh can store yore valuables."

An expression of annoyance flashed across Parks' face, but he smiled.

"I never take their money on short acquaintance," he said dryly.

Hashknife and Sleepy went with Parks to his little office, where they sat down together. Parks said:

"I saw you talking with Cash Evans a while ago, Hartley."

"I reckon most everybody in Tonto Wells saw us, Parks."

The lawyer nodded quickly. "They're curious folks, Hartley. Cash Evans and I have been friends for years, and he had me read him the letter from Bob Marsh, in which you were mentioned. In fact, I've handled his affairs for a long time. I know his moves as well as he does."

"Kinda actin' as eyes for him, eh?" said Hashknife.

"Yes, you might say, I am. He spoke to you about being robbed of cattle?"

"Yeah, he mentioned it. Said the law didn't believe him."

"That's true, Hartley. He can't convince Buck Foley that someone is stealing his cattle."

"Has Buck Foley made any investigation?" asked Hashknife.

The lawyer shrugged his thin shoulders. "He says he has."

The lawyer watched Hashknife's long, muscular fingers manufacture a cigarette, while Sleepy, slouched in a chair, studied the lawyer. Sleepy didn't like lawyers. Perhaps it was because they fought with words, instead of guns or fists.

"Buck Foley," said Hashknife, "strikes me as bein' honest."

"Certainly, he is honest," agreed Parks quickly. "He just doesn't believe that someone is stealing Cash Evans' cattle."

"Yuh heard about the big steal at Remuda?" queried Hashknife.

"Certainly. Buck Foley has to admit that theft."

"And yuh heard about the murder, too, I reckon."

"I attended the inquest, Hartley."

Hashknife inhaled deeply, his brow furrowed, as the smoke lazily trickled from his nostrils. Finally he said:

"How long have you known Cash Evans, Mr. Parks?"

"A great many years, Hartley. We both lived in Tucson."

"Was that before he was married?"

"Yes. Cash moved here and established the IE spread. Later I came and went into the law business. But that hasn't anything to do with this cattle rustling situation."

"I suppose not. Has Cash Evans got any real enemies around here?"

"Perhaps. Who hasn't—in their own country? In spite of the fact that Cash is my friend, I will admit that Cash was a ruthless man. He had a terrible temper, and made enemies. Now—well, he's a broken old man."

"Gropin' in the dark," added Hashknife quietly. "It's terrible, Parks. Are his children kind to him?"

"Of course. I appealed to them to come back here and look after him. They didn't remember him—much. Laura is ninetten now and Fred is twenty-one. They were away from him sixteen years; so you can't expect them to have a lot of affection for him, Hartley. Mrs. Evans died several years ago."

"They'll get the ranch, when Evans dies?" queried Hashknife.

"Certainly."

"Yuh hear talk," remarked Hashknife, "that Evans never put a cent in a bank—that he cached the money. Is that true, Parks?"

PARKS smiled slowly. "A lawyer is not supposed to violate a confidence, Hartley. Yuh see, I wrote Cash Evans' will."

"I see. Well, I don't see what good I can do around here, Parks. I don't know the people, I don't know local conditions. I promised Evans that I'd come out and talk with him; so I reckon I'm bound to go out there, but I don't know of anythin' I can do."

"You go and talk to him, Hartley. I've told you about all I can. Thank you for coming over—and I hope you can help us."

Hashknife and Sleepy found Lonesome Pine, the deputy, sprawled in a chair in the shade of the office porch, his sombrero pulled low over his eyes. They sat down on the edge of the high sidewalk.

"Didja get a sermon on cattle rustlin' from Cal Parks?" asked Lonesome, chuckling a little.

"Well, it didn't amount to much," replied Hashknife.

"Yuh know," mused Lonesome, "seein' you and Cash Evans, settin' in that buckboard reminded me of somethin' that happened sixteen years ago. I wasn't a dep-

uty sheriff then. It was when Mrs. Cash Evans and her two little kids ran away from Cash. I reckon he was pretty mean to her, but I don't know that part of the story.

"It seems that Cash was away from home, when a man, drivin' a sorrel team and a buckboard, came to the ranch, loaded Mrs. Evans, her two kids and a trunk into the buckboard and took 'em to Cinnibar, where they got on the train, and nobody knowed where they went.

"Mind yuh, that buckboard never came through Tonto Wells. They circled the town. One of Cash's punchers, seein' the buckboard and team, from a distance, recognized it as belongin' to a feller named Mose Leach."

Lonesome tilted his hat back and then scratched his forehead, his eyes thoughtful.

"A couple days later," he continued, "Mose Leach was found outside his house, shot to ribbons. It was hinted that Mose was killed for helpin' Mrs. Evans get away, but later it was proved that Mose was here in Tonto Wells all the day that Mrs. Evans rode to Cinnibar with her kids."

"Well, that's kinda interestin'," drawled Hashknife.

"Yeah, it is," agreed Lonesome. "Nothin' was ever done, 'cause there wasn't any evidence that Mose was killed on that account. No one knew where Mrs. Evans went; so they couldn't find out from her who drove the team. Anyway, they couldn't hold that feller. All he done was drive the team and help her get away. Folks was kinda glad she done it, too."

"Did Evans try to find her?" asked Hashknife.

"I dunno. If he did, he sure kept it quiet. No one ever said anythin' to him about it, because he had a hell of a temper. Anyway, it was *his* business. Mebbe he didn't care—I dunno."

"Maybe he didn't care to have folks know how much he cared," said Hashknife.

"That's my own feelin's in this matter," nodded Lonesome.

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy waited until after supper to ride out to the Evans ranch, which was about five miles from Tonto Wells. It was a picturesque old place, part adobe, with a big, thickly-walled *patio*. All of the buildings were in good repair, and there did not seem to be any tumble-down fences around the home ranch.

Ed Small, the foreman, met them at the house and introduced himself, before taking them inside. They met Laura and Fred Evans, who were in the main room with their father. Laura was a very pretty girl, pleasant and refined. Fred was only tweny-one, but there were marks of dissipation on his face. He seemed greatly bored, and quickly excused himself. Laura went upstairs to her room, and the foreman went out, leaving Cash Evans alone with Hashknife and Sleepy.

"I'm very glad yuh came," said Evans quietly.

"We had a talk with Parks today," said Hashknife.

"Did yuh? Cal's a fine man, Hartley. I don't know what I'd do without him—especially now. You met Laura and Freddy, of course. You don't know what it means to have them here with me. Had to get acquainted all over again—and I can't see them. Maybe I can make up to them—but that don't interest you. Cal talked about the cattle rustlin', I suppose."

"Yeah, he talked about it," agreed Hashknife.

"I want you and yore pardner to stop, Hartley. I'll pay yuh well. Bob Marsh says yo're the only man he knows who could help me. I don't care what it costs me. Don't take the job out of sympathy. Damn it, I've been a hard man all my life. I never gave sympathy to anybody—and I don't want any myself. Maybe I didn't play all the games on the square. But I'm in a hole now and I can't help

myself. I'm not rich. But what I've got I want to keep for my two kids. How about it, Hartley?"

"Yo're bein' robbed," said Hashknife quietly. "We'll take that much for granted. The question is—who? And how do they dispose of the cattle? Are they taken off this range and herded to another? Might be quite a job to find this all out, Evans. It can't be done in a day."

"I don't give a damn!" exploded the blind man. "Take weeks, if yuh need weeks. I'll pay yore price, Hartley."

"How do yuh stand with the other cattlemen in the country around here?"

Evans laughed bitterly. "Not very good, Hartley. Jeff Beaudry and me ain't never been friends, but I believe he's honest. I'd swear that Ed Carson is honest. I believe it's outsiders, Hartley. Find the gang that cut out those hundred head of Bar V's from Carson's herd, and you'll have the men who have been robbin' me."

"You say that Buck Foley don't believe yo're bein' robbed. Do yuh feel that Buck is an honest man?" asked Hashknife.

"Square as a dollar, but none too damn bright. He couldn't find a snowball on a mud-bank. No, we can eliminate the sheriff's office."

"It don't leave me much to work on," smiled Hashknife.

"Then you will take the job?" asked Evans eagerly.

"I'll think about it, Evans. We'll be around here for a while, and I'll see what I can pick up. There don't seem to be much to work on."

"Take your time."

Evans felt his way over to an old desk, which he unlocked and took out a package of currency. Feeling his way back to Hashknife, he gave him the money.

"That's a hundred dollars for runnin' expenses," he said. "I won't thank yuh, Hartley. I never thanked anybody. Just my way, I reckon. I feel things that I never say. Too damn stubborn, I reckon. Good luck to yuh, boys."

THEY shook hands with him and walked out. Ed Small joined them and walked to the horses. He didn't ask them if they were going to work on the case. He said:

"Queer layout, Hartley. A blind man, two children he ain't seen for sixteen years—and never will see. The girl's all right, but Fred is a fool. Drinks like a fish, and he's only twenty-one. Don't like the place, don't like anythin'—except himself."

"Why don'tcha make a puncher out of him?" asked Sleepy.

"Can't even get him on a horse. He shore don't take after his old man."

"You knew Mrs. Evans?" asked Hashknife.

"Nope. That was before my time. I've been here ten years."

"You don't happen to have any ideas on this cow stealin', do yuh?"

"If I did," replied Small quickly, "we wouldn't need any outside help. You'll notice that we all ride with a Winchester handy."

"Uh-huh. Well, I'm afraid it'll take more than a rifle to dig out this bunch, Small. I'm pleased to have met yuh, and hope to see yuh again."

They both shook hands with the foreman, and rode back to town. In their room, Sleepy said:

"What's yore opinion, pardner?"

"I haven't any," replied Hashknife. "Didja see anythin'?"

"While you was talkin' with Evans I kept my eyes open. The young son listened from behind the kitchen door, and the girl stayed at the top of the stairs. She opened and shut her door, but didn't go in."

"I sized up Freddy," smiled Hashknife. "He's toleratin' his father, in order to get his share of the proceeds. Too bad. The girl seems nice, too. Maybe she was only interested in her father, talkin' with strangers."

"She could be," nodded Sleepy. "But where can yuh start?"

"Who knows?" queried Hashknife. "There don't seem to be any place to start. I like Cash Evans. Maybe he was a hard old devil, but I'll bet he's honest. Don't want sympathy. Well, we won't give him any. Let's go to bed and sleep on it."

THE following morning Hashknife and Sleepy rode out to the Box 88, where they talked with Ed Carson, the owner, and Len Harris. Carson was not in favor with the theory that the Bar V had stolen those hundred head of cattle and taken them back to their own range. Len Harris felt that this was the only reasonable theory.

"We talked with Cash Evans last night," Hashknife told him, "and he swears that he is bein' robbed."

"Mebbe he is," nodded Carson. "He ought to know."

"The Evans boys are ridin' with Winchesters," added Len.

"What'd yuh think of Cash Evans?" asked Carson curiously.

"I believe he's honest," replied Hashknife.

"I've always believed he was. He's been honest in every deal between us. He's a hard man, and in some cases he's been pretty damn mean, but I don't believe he'd pull a crooked deal. You seen his son and daughter?"

"That son ain't much good," said Len quickly.

"Yeah, we met 'em," nodded Hashknife.

"I heard," said Len, "that Cash won't give the boy enough money to pay his liquor bills; so the kid's borrowin' from Cal Parks. That won't last long, 'cause Parks is as close as the bark on a manzanita."

"Of course," said Carson dryly, "the girl's fine."

"Yuh can't expect her to borrow money to buy whiskey," said Len.

"Did you know Mrs. Evans?" asked Hashknife of Ed Carson.

"Yeah, I knew her, Hartley. She was a pretty woman. I reckon Cash didn't treat her so good, 'cause she ran away from him."

"I heard somethin' about a man gettin' killed over that."

"Well," drawled Carson thoughtfully, "that was a question. She went to Cinnibar in a buckboard belongin' to a man named Mose Leach. Later Mose Leach was called out of his house and riddled with bullets. We never did know who done it."

"I heard," said Hashknife, "that Mose Leach was in Tonto Wells all day, and couldn't have been in Cinnibar."

"Yeah, I've heard that, too. Maybe it was true. Maybe it never had anythin' to do with the runaway of Mrs. Evans. Couldn't prove anythin'. In fact, nothin' was done about it. Leach wasn't any white-winged angel, and he had enemies. I never felt that Evans killed him. Leach was unarmed, and I don't believe Evans would have shot an unarmed man. At least, that is my idea of Cash Evans."

Hashknife and Sleepy came back to Tonto Wells about noon. Lonesome Pine, the deputy, met them in front of the hotel, after they had stabled their horses.

"More trouble in Remuda," he told them. "Buck and Doc left a couple hours ago, goin' over to bring back the remains."

"Whose remains?" asked Hashknife.

"Pete Coverly."

"Lovely dove!" exclaimed Sleepy. "Somebody didn't like the way he dealt poker, eh?"

Lonesome shrugged his shoulders. "*Quien sabe?* The word was that he got

his wings or a shovel in a gun-fight with somebody—and they didn't know who he was. Jist sort of a two-man affair, as far as we know. Buck and Doc drove out of town, swearin' a blue streak over havin' to go to Remuda on that damnable road. That only leaves five more trips, in case everybody in town gets killed, one at a time."

"Coverly was a bad boy," said Hashknife.

"I hope to tell yuh—he was. Oh-oh! Look who we have among us!"

A lone rider was coming down the main street on a jaded roan horse. He reined to the right and drew up at a hitch-rack, where he dismounted.

"Tex Neely, foreman of the Bar V," said Lonesome.

"Was the foreman," corrected Hashknife. "He's got his war-sack tied to his cantle."

"That's right. Uh-huh-h-h! Pete Coverly dead—and Tex out of a job."

"Remuda," said Sleepy dryly, "is goin' to the dogs."

TEX walked stiffly into the Blue Bucket Saloon, after a sharp glance across at the three men in front of the hotel.

"I wonder," said Hashknife, "if Tex lost his job over losin' those cattle."

"I'm wonderin'," added Lonesome, "if Tex knows anythin' about the de-mise of Pete Coverly."

"Tex Neely, the man of mystery," sighed Sleepy. "I'm hungry. Never could do a good job of thinkin' on an empty stomach. Takes my mind off things."

"Yo're hungry most of the time," remarked Hashknife. "Let's eat. How about you, Lonesome?"

"I've done et," replied Lonesome. "Mebbe I'll go over and see what Tex has to say. See yuh later."

Tex was alone at the bar, drinking whiskey, when Lonesome came in.

"Hyah, Tex," smiled the deputy. "Just get in town?"

"You seen me ride in," replied Tex gruffly. "Have a drink?"

"Yeah, I'll have one—thank yuh."

"What's Hartley and Stevens doin' here?"

"Oh, just seein' the sights, I reckon."

"What sights?" queried Tex.

"I dunno. Free country, ain't it?" queried Lonesome, pouring his drink.

"Pretty much so, I reckon. Here's how."

They drank and put their glasses on the bar.

"Hear about Pete Coverly?" asked Lonesome.

"What about him?" asked Tex quickly.

"Got himself killed last night. Didn't yuh meet Buck and Doc? They're on the way to Remuda."

Tex spat thoughtfully and hitched up his cartridge belt.

"I didn't come through Remuda," he said. "Came straight over the hills from the Bar V. So Pete's dead, eh? Any information on who got him?"

"Nope."

"Huh! Well, he bragged a lot—Pete did. Somebody was bound to git him, sooner or later. Ever git any line on who the stranger was who got shotgunned in Remuda?"

"Nope." Lonesome shook his head. "Never even got a line on them stolen cattle either."

Tex hooked his elbows over the bar and gnawed at his lower lip, as he looked around the place.

"Goin' to be with us a while," asked Lonesome.

"I don't reckon so. I quit the Bar V. Too damn lonesome for me. Mebbe take a job over in New Mexico. A feller's been wantin' me a long time. I want to be nearer town. What's Hartley and Stevens doin'?"

"You asked me that before," reminded Lonesome.

"Yeah, that's right. Mebbe they'll go to work here?"

"Mebbe—I dunno. Have another drink, Tex."

"Uh-huh. Heard that Cash Evans has gone blind."

"That's right. This is better than Remuda whiskey. I've allus wondered what real good whiskey tastes like."

"Yuh can't make it any better'n this," declared the bartender.

"When they take farmers off the fields, that's the first thing they learn 'em," said Lonesome.

"If they can keep their face straight, and say that yuh can't make any better whiskey than this, they give 'em jobs as bartenders. Otherwise, they go back farmin' and remain honest."

"Hell, I never was any farmer," declared the bartender.

"You never was much of a bartender either," said Lonesome dryly.

"Pete Coverly sold awful bad whiskey," sighed Tex. "Now, he won't sell any more."

"Life's funny," said Lonesome. "Like the rooster said, Yesterday, an egg; tomorrow, a feather-duster, so what's the use?"

"He wasn't killed for sellin' bad whiskey, was he?" asked the bartender seriously.

"More'n likely," replied Lonesome. "It don't pay."

"We've been sellin' the same whiskey here for years."

"I know it—and out of the same barrel."

"Where'd Hartley and Stevens go?" asked Tex.

"Went to eat," replied Lonesome. "Didja want to see 'em for somethin'?"

"Nope. Why would I?"

"I never was worth a damn at riddles," said Lonesome dryly. "Ain't it about time for the bartender to buy a drink?"

"You fellers never invited me to drink," protested the bartender.

"I never buy drinks for a bartender," said Lonesome. "Be just like buyin' a handful of dirt for a farmer. I'll buy another."

LONESOME paid for the drinks and got interested in a music-box which played "The Washington Post March" on a huge metal disc. It wasn't very loud nor very complete, due to years of service, but it was music.

"I like "Sweet Bunch of Daisies," said Tex soberly. "You ain't got that, have yuh, bartender?"

"Ain't got nothin' but Stars and Stripes Forever," said the bartender.

"Put 'er on, will yuh?"

"No use. When Bud Jones was over here from the Bar V he thought it was a newfangled target. Them little needles won't play forty-five holes."

"Then yuh only got this one piece?"

"Ain't that enough? It all sounds alike to me."

Hashknife and Sleepy strolled in and spoke pleasantly to Tex, who nodded sourly.

"Hashknife, can you sing 'Sweet Bunch of Daisies'?" asked Lonesome.

"Why?" asked Hashknife curiously.

"Tex is kinda honin' for to hear it. He's musical—Tex is."

"Aw-w-w, hell!" snorted Tex. "Hartley, I hear yore friend, Pete Coverly, got killed last night."

"Uh-huh. Prob'ly made his last bad deal. I understand that you and him was pretty close, Tex."

"Who told yuh that?" snapped Tex.

"Well," smiled Hashknife, "when I see a feller pattin' another on the back and callin' him, 'Petey, old partner,' I kinda figure they're friends."

"Well, sure—yeah, me and Pete was friends. I liked him fine. We got along good. Sure, I thought a lot of Pete. I wish I knowed who killed him."

"Didja quit the Bar V?" asked Sleepy.

"Uh-huh. Too damn lonesome. I'm a feller that likes towns. Mebbe I'll go over to New Mexico."

"Do yuh know anybody over there?" asked Lonesome.

"Hell, no! But a good cow-hand don't need to know anybody to git a job."

"You said a feller was tryin' to git yuh for a long time. Wasn't he in New Mexico?"

"No, I think that was in Wyomin'. Say! What are you tryin' to do—trip me up, feller?"

"You ain't done nothin' to be tripped up over, have yuh, Tex?" asked Lonesome.

"Well, I don't like to have anybody tryin' to make me out a liar."

"You goin' to be here long, Tex?" asked Hashknife.

"That wouldn't make any difference to you, would it?" countered Tex.

"Gettin' pesty," sighed Sleepy. "That's the trouble with long-haired folks from the lonesome hills. They get into town, where folks talk a civilized language, and they think they're bein' picked on."

"Aw, hell!" grunted Tex. "I think I'll stable my bronc and get a few hours' sleep. Rode all night—comin' across the hills from the ranch."

THEN he walked out, mounted his horse and rode down to the livery-stable. Hashknife and Sleepy went down to the office with Lonesome.

"I'll make yuh a little bet that Tex knows plenty about the killin' of Pete Coverly," said Lonesome.

Hashknife smiled thoughtfully. "I wouldn't bet yuh, Lonesome," he said, "and I wouldn't go far to convict Tex of that job. We can get along without Coverly."

On their way back to the hotel they met Cal Parks, the lawyer. He had been out to the Evans ranch and talked with Cash Evans.

"I'm not going to advise you in any way," he told Hashknife. "You handle this in any way you please."

"Well, that's nice of yuh," said Hashknife soberly. "Yo're takin' it for granted that we're workin' for Cash Evans, I suppose."

"Well, he gave you some expense money. At least, that was my understanding."

"If yuh had any advice—what would it be?" asked Hashknife.

"I haven't any at all."

"I see. You heard about Pete Coverly gettin' killed at Remuda last night, I suppose."

"Yes, I heard that this morning. I did not know Coverly. Well, good day and good luck."

"Our services are goin' to be worth a lot around here," said Hashknife, as they walked on to the hotel. "Everybody knows now that we are workin' for Cash Evans, and that means we can't trust anybody. I don't like this job, Sleepy—it's dynamite."

"All right," said Sleepy. "We'll pull out, go past Evans' ranch and give him back his money—and call it a day. I'm just as jumpy as you are. We're just a pair of animated targets, goin' around, waitin' for somebody to make a bull's-eye. Every time somebody slams a door, I get all goose-pimples."

"And still," said Hashknife, "it's the first time that a blind man ever asked us to help him. I would kinda like to do somethin' for Evans."

"Dead men can't help him none, pardner."

"Yeah, that's true, too. Well, I dunno—mebbe it ain't so awful bad."

"Who can yuh trust?" asked Sleepy.

"Well, there's me and you—and mebbe Buck Foley and Lonesome Pine. I believe yuh can tie to Ed Carson and Len Harris, too. Outside of that, I can't name a single one."

"How about Cal Parks, the lawyer?" queried Sleepy.

"I haven't quite figured him out yet," smiled Hashknife.

There was a dance that night in the big hall upstairs over the general store.

Cowboys came to town in their celluloid collars and polished boots, bringing their girls, clad in their best bib and tucker. Miners came in from the mines, and everyone prepared for a big time. Lonesome Pine, choking in a high collar, smelling of perfume, and with his hair plastered and oiled, complained bitterly over dances in general and Tonto Wells dances in particular.

"Got to circulate around and keep order," he wailed, "and I've got to be duded up thisaway. Stub a toe and cut m' throat. Won't have time to dance. Allus some whippoorwill thinkin' that some other hillbilly is tryin' to steal his girl, and then there's a fight. Once in a while we have a good'n, too—and I usually git hell knocked out of me, tryin' to stop it."

"Have yuh seen anythin' of Tex Neeley this evenin'?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah, he's over at the Blue Bucket, nursin' a mean jag. I wish he'd get drunk enough for me to steal his gun. Ease my mind a lot, I'll tell yuh. There'll be plenty around here just as tough as Tex, and just as mean, after they git seven, eight drinks under their belts. If we don't have a man for breakfast, I'll eat yore hat."

Hashknife and Sleepy watched the crowd come to town, leave the women at the dance hall, and make their regular trips to the Blue Bucket Bar, which was the nearest saloon. Arguments flared up, old scores rejuvenated, after a few drinks, caused bitter recriminations, but there was no fighting. Tex Neeley sat moodily against the wall, tilted back in a chair, peering from under his hat brim, but taking no part in the jollity.

Ed Carson and his men came to the dance. Jeff Beaudry came in with three of his men. Ed Small brought in Laura and Fred Evans. Hashknife and Sleepy went up to the hall, where a cowtown orchestra sawed mightily, and four sets of dancers went through the intricacies of the square-dance. They saw Laura Evans, modishly gowned, wry-faced, as she danced with a wild-eyed, heel-hitting cowpuncher from the hinterland.

The aroma of boiling coffee and freshly-cut cake came from an adjoining room, where the Ladies' Aid Society prepared the dance supper. Men stood in the hallway, puffing feverishly on cigarettes, mopping their prespiring faces, and exchanging opinions on the dancing ability of the girls.

Hashknife and Sleepy went back to the Blue Bucket. Several cowboys were at the bar, trying to harmonize "Just Break the News to Mother," and making a very sour effort, as each tried to sing tenor. One old rawhider was leaning against the bar, crying into his drink. Tex Neeley was out of his chair, coming down through the crowd. He did not even nod to Hashknife and Sleepy, as he passed, going to the front door, where he stopped full in the doorway. Hashknife turned his head and looked back at Tex, just as a gun crashed out in the street. Tex jerked back, turned, as though to come back into the saloon, but his knees buckled, and he fell sprawling toward the bar.

FOR a moment there was silence, and then the crowd broke into an uproar, Hashknife leaped past Tex and went through the doorway. A knot of men were coming from the dance hall, but there was no one near enough to have fired that shot. They came running, and one man said:

"I seen that shot. Two men went runnin' around the saloon. Did anybody get hit? Yuh could see the streak of fire from that gun!"

Hashknife went back into the saloon, where the crowd stood around Tex Neeley. Buck Foley knelt beside him, and Hashknife shoved his way to Buck's side. Someone had gone to get Doc MacLarey.

Tex wasn't dead, but he was mighty close to it. He mumbled:

"—dirty — coyotes — wanted — my share——"

"Who shot yuh, Tex?" asked Hashknife. "Who wanted yore share, Tex?"

Tex tried to answer, but his lips refused to form the words. Hashknife got to his feet, as Doc MacLarey shoved his way from the doorway. There was no need for MacLarey, except as coroner.

Sleepy was at the rear end of the bar, watching the back entrance, but now he came to the front and joined Hashknife. He shook his head, as Hashknife glanced at him, and together they walked across the street to the front of the hotel.

"Nobody came in the back way since the shot was fired," he told Hashknife. "I went back and watched, as soon as I saw Tex go down."

"Quick thinkin'," said Hashknife in appreciation. "They probably circled around and went to the dance hall. Tex came here to get his cut of those stolen Bar V cows, and they beat him out of it, Sleepy."

"Good shootin'," remarked Sleepy.

"Too good," added Hashknife. "Let's go down to Doc's place and see that body."

Doctor MacLarey and the sheriff were there, and they welcomed Hashknife and Sleepy.

"Did yuh find anythin' in his pockets?" asked Hashknife. The doctor pointed at a small table, on which were laid the contents of Tex Neeley's pockets. There were several pieces of silver, an old watch, a knife, some extra revolver ammunition, tobacco and cigarette papers and a half-box of snuff. There was a piece of folded paper, marked and dirty, which Hashknife unfolded. On it, written in pencil and partly obliterated, were several numbers. Apparently someone had laboriously multiplied one hundred by two hundred and fifty, and the result was another two hundred and fifty, with a scrawled dollar sign.

"Make anythin' out of it?" queried Buck Foley, the sheriff.

"Yeah," nodded Hashknife. "Tex was to get two dollars and a half for each of them hundred cows stolen at Remuda. But, instead, he got a forty-five through his heart. They killed him to save two hundred and fifty dollars."

Buck Foley scratched his head thoughtfully, as he examined the paper.

"I'll bet that was it," he agreed. "I wonder if Tex had anythin' to do with the shootin' of Pete Coverly."

"Maybe," suggested Hashknife. "Tex was to make a split with Pete."

"The payoff for both of 'em was a forty-five," smiled the doctor.

"No witnesses in Remuda, eh?" queried Hashknife.

"Not a soul. Happened about midnight. Depot agent heard the shot."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed the sheriff. "If what you say is the right theory, Hartley—them hundred cows are here. They never took 'em back to the Bar V. All we've got to do is find a hundred Bar V—no, that's no good. The Box 88 got a bunch of 'em. Have to count all them. But where are those cows bein' held?"

"That's yore job, Buck," smiled Hashknife.

"And," added Sleepy, "when they start shootin' yuh through the heart, you'll know yo're gettin' close to the answer."

The doctor tossed a small chunk of lead on the table.

"I took that out of Tex Neeley," he said.

It was a forty-five bullet, the nose of which had been cut deeply across at right angles, with a sharp blade.

"A dum-dum bullet!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Man, them are bad!"

"A murderer's cross," said Sleepy.

CAL PARKS, the lawyer, flung open the door and sumbled in. He was dusty and disheveled, a smear of blood across one cheek, and his left eye was badly swollen.

"Excuse me," he panted. "I didn't know anybody—"

"What happened to you?" asked Buck Foley.

"A—a man jumped me in the dark and knocked me down, Sheriff. I did not see

who he was. Just left me lying there. I thought maybe Doc could do something for this eye."

"Oh, maybe I can fix you up a little, Cal," said the doctor dryly.

"I—I hope so. What are we coming to, I wonder."

"Hit you without any reason whatever, eh?" queried Hashknife.

"I—I guess—well, he must have. I haven't had any trouble."

"I've known lawyers I'd like to meet in the dark," said Sleepy.

"It didn't happen to be Freddy Evans, did it?" asked Hashknife.

Cal Parks whirled and glared at Hashknife.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Why do you ask me that?"

"I heard that yo're furnishin' him with whiskey money."

"What if I—that's none of your damn business!"

"Thank yuh for answerin'," said Hashknife dryly.

"For answering?" queried the lawyer. "I never answered. I don't know who circulated the report that I'm furnishing Fred Evans with money to buy liquor."

"Well, are yuh?" asked Buck Foley.

"That's my business!" snapped the irritated lawyer.

"Better let me look at that eye," suggested the doctor.

Hashknife, Sleepy and the sheriff left the doctor's office and went up to the main street.

"Do you think Fred Evans punched him in the eye?" asked the sheriff.

"Of course he did, Buck. I saw the kid drinkin' at the Blue Bucket. He likely ran out of money and Parks wouldn't give him any more; so the kid busted him in the eye."

"I'm glad I ain't a lawyer," sighed the sheriff.

"So am I," agreed Sleepy. "If yuh was, I wouldn't like yuh half so well, Buck."

Buck left them in front of the hotel, and they went up to bed. Hashknife tried the key in the lock, only to find that the door had been forced open. Their warsacks had been emptied, the contents strewn around the room. On the table, beside the lamp was a piece of paper, on which had been penciled:

GIT OUT WILE THE RODE IS OPEN OR TAKE WHAT TEX GOT.

Hashknife smiled grimly as he read the note aloud to Sleepy.

"I don't see anythin' to grin about," said Sleepy.

"Well, it kinda simplifies things, pardner. Now we know damn well they're after us."

"Yeah, that's fine. Before this, we wasn't sure they'd kill us—but now we know blamed well they will. The jury left its verdict."

"Do yuh want to take their advice, Sleepy?" asked Hashknife. "The road is open, and it's only twenty miles to Cinnibar. We can be there before mornin'."

Sleepy sat down on the edge of the bed and rolled a cigarette. They could hear the faint sounds of the dance orchestra, the drone of voices from the Blue Bucket, and several cowboy voices blended in song. Hashknife hunched on a chair, smoking a cigarette, his gray eyes studying Sleepy's face.

"After tonight, we'll be marked men, Sleepy," he said.

Sleepy got up slowly, picked up a chair and walked over to the door, where he braced the back of the chair under the knob.

Hashknife smiled and began pulling of his boots. Sleepy had made his decision.

THERE were a few blear-eyed cowboys around town next morning when Hashknife and Sleepy finished breakfast. Buck Foley and Lonesome Pine were still asleep, having been up all night. Cash Evans and Ed Small came to town, and Hashknife

went over to the buckboard to have a talk with the owner of the IE spread.

Evans had all the news about the murder of Tex Neeley. He had known Tex for several years. Hashknife handed Evans the note he had received from the rustlers, but Evans handed it back to him.

"Sorry," said Hashknife. "I forgot. Here's what it says: 'Git out while the road is open or take what Tex got.' "

Evans' face hardened for a moment. Then he said, "You stayed."

"We're here, Cash."

"Good! I didn't think you'd scare easy. I believe you and Sleepy better come out to the ranch. At least, you'll be with folks yuh can trust; and Tonto Wells might be dangerous."

"All right," agreed Hashknife. "We'll saddle up right away. I'll tell Sleepy."

The ride out to the Evans ranch was without incident. As there were five men sleeping in the bunkhouse, Hashknife and Sleepy were given a room upstairs in the ranchhouse. The windows and a door from their room opened out on a balcony above the patio, completely shaded by a huge sycamore.

CLOUDY WEEKS, the old cook, told Evans that Laura and Fred were still asleep. Hashknife and Sleepy met Ed Small in the patio, and they all sprawled in the shade to talk things over. There was little use trying to get any work out of the crew the day after a dance.

They discussed the killing of Tex Neeley, and Hashknife told Small about somebody hitting Cal Parks in the eye. That incident seemed to amuse Small. Hashknife asked him if Cash Evans knew that Fred was getting money from Parks.

"Yuh never know just how much Cash does know," he replied. Fred's nice as pie around him, but—well, I'd hate to have a son who didn't have one damn bit of affection for me."

"Cash Evans can't expect too much, yuh must remember," said Hashknife.

"No, that's true. I dunno how this will work out. Personally, I don't believe they'll stay here. All that either of 'em are lookin' for is to inherit this ranch. Parks made out a will, givin' them everythin'. 'Course, Cash told him what to write. That was after Laura and Fred came here. Before that, he didn't have no will. In order to get them to come, Parks told 'em that Cash wouldn't live long. Mebbe Doc MacLarey told Parks that, I dunno. Doc and Cash was pretty good friends. You can take a look at Cash and figure that he ain't goin' to die no natural death for a long time."

Hashknife smiled slowly. "Are the kids gettin' impatient?" he asked.

"Figure it out thisaway," replied Small. "Both of these kids grew up in a city. Laura is a pretty girl, likes to wear nice clothes, and have a good time. Fred is a dirty little lizard, who wants women and whiskey. He don't know a cow from a unicorn, and he don't want to learn. The other day he says to me, 'I wonder where the old man hides his money.'

"I asked him what the hell it was to him, and he got sore. He said he'd be damned if he was goin' to bury himself out here in the desert much longer."

"I heard that Cash Evans wouldn't have anythin' to do with banks," remarked Hashknife.

"Yeah, I reckon that's right."

"I don't like to be curious," said Hashknife, "but if he *has* buried his money, does Cal Parks know where it's buried?"

Ed Small dug at the packed adobe with a boot-heel, shifted his position and looked at Hashknife.

"You've talked with Cash, Hartley," he said quietly. "I dunno how much you

know about human nature, but does he strike you as a plumb damn fool?"

"That's a good answer," smiled Hashknife.

"You wouldn't trust Cal Parks?"

"With buried money? Not even if I had the best eyes on earth, Small."

"Neither would I."

LATER in the afternoon Hashknife found Laura in the patio, cutting some roses for her room. He asked her if she had a good time at the dance in Tonto Wells, and she said:

"It was quite an experience. That was my first dance here, you see."

"That's right. You was too young to dance, when you left here."

"It was rather rough," she said. "My feet are a sight!"

She sat down on a bench to arrange her roses, and Hashknife sprawled on the grass beside the wall.

"I reckon," he said dryly, "the cowboys will beat new trails to the Evans ranch. You'll cause every one of 'em to start shavin' once a week and washin' their necks almost every day, Miss Evans."

Laura laughed. "I am not interested in cowboys, Mr. Hartley."

"That won't make any difference—they are interested in you."

"Well, my goodness, what can I do?"

"I never had any experience in that line," smiled Hashknife.

"Naturally," she said. "Are you going to stay here?"

"Yeah, we may stay a few days. Yuh see, we're tryin' to find out who is stealin' yore cows, Miss Evans."

"Oh, I see. Are you a detective, Mr. Hartley?"

"No-o-o," he drawled, "just a couple driftin' cowboys. How old was you when you left here?"

"About three. I did not remember much about it. Freddy was just past five."

"Freddy didn't grow up—much, did he?"

Laura looked quickly at Hashknife. "Why do you say that?"

"Oh, just from what I've heard."

Laura rearranged her flowers, before she said:

"Freddy is old enough to know what he wants, Mr. Hartley."

"Age hasn't much to do with it," he said. "I've heard a lot about how yore mother felt obliged to leave here; so I don't blame you and Freddy for not havin' a lot of love for Cash Evans. It was a bad deal. But I feel that he cares a lot for you two; so make it as easy for him as yuh can."

But Laura was not inclined to take friendly advice. She got up from the bench and said, "For a stranger, you are presuming a lot, Mr. Hartley. This situation is none of your affair; so I'd advise you to keep out of it."

"Thank yuh very much," he said humbly, as she walked away from him and went into the house.

Hashknife walked over under the balcony, reached up, grasped a heavy branch of the sycamore, swung himself up, grasped the balcony railing and vaulted quietly across. He opened the door and walked into their room, hardly having made a sound from the time he left the ground.

The hallway door was ajar, and he heard Freddy's voice saying:

"I don't care what you said to him—keep away from him."

"Yes," replied Laura's voice, "and you better quit drinking so much liquor; you smell like a distillery."

Hashknife sprawled on the bed and smoked a cigarette. It was quite evident that as far as Laura and Freddy were concerned, he and Sleepy were not welcome. But why? Why should they object to someone being there, when that someone was working for their interests?

It was nearly suppertime, when Sleepy came in, closed the door and sat down on the edge of the bed.

"There's a puncher workin' here, who goes by the name of Jim Crow," he told Hashknife. "I know blamed well we've known him somewhere, but I can't quite place him. Ed Small introduced me to him down at the corral, and he got away as fast as he could. You'll see him at supper, and maybe you can remember who he is. He's been here about a year."

"The name don't sound familiar, except for whiskey," smiled Hashknife. "Sleepy, this is a queer outfit. I had a talk with Laura, tryin' to get an idea of things, but she got huffy.

"Later I heard Freddy warnin' her to keep away from me, and she warned him to quit drinkin' so much."

"Well, I didn't learn much," said Sleepy. "I found out that Tex Neeley used to work for the Quarter Circle JNB spread. I also found out that there was quite a battle between this outfit and the JNB over the contract to furnish beef to the mines. Small says that Beaudry cut the contract price so low that they couldn't meet it."

IN a few minutes the supper gong rang, and they went down to the long table in the dining room. Cash Evans, Laura and Fred did not eat with the men. There were only three men, not including Hashknife and Sleepy; Ed Small, Sid White and Buzz McKee. There was one empty place.

Small said, "Where's Jim Crow?"

"He was down at the stable, when I came up," replied Buzz McKee. "He said his stummick wasn't so awful good, after dancin' all night."

"He didn't dance on his stummick," remarked Sid White. "Anyway, he was stewed to the eyebrows, when we got home this mornin'. He'll be all right by mornin'."

Cloudy Weeks was a good cook, and the meal was more than satisfactory to Hashknife and Sleepy.

"I'll pack somethin' out to Jim after while," said Cloudy. "I know how he feels."

But there was no use taking food out to Jim Crow, because Jim Crow was not on the ranch. In fact, Jim's horse, saddle and all his personal belongings were gone.

"That's damn funny," declared Ed Small. "He's got about twenty dollars comin'. He didn't say anythin' about pullin' out, did he?"

"He just said that his stummick was weak," replied Buzz.

ED SMALL saw the grin on Sleepy's face as he looked at Hashknife, and drew Hashknife aside.

"Did you know Jim Crow?" he asked.

"I don't know," smiled Hashknife. "Sleepy saw him, and was sure that they had met before, but couldn't place him. It looks as though Mr. Crow didn't care to associate with us."

Ed Small nodded thoughtfully. "We're prob'ly better off without him," he said. "He had a habit of disappearin' for a day or two, and sayin' that he got too many drinks, and didn't come home."

"He did, eh?" mused Hashknife. "Ed, you won't have to think hard to remember if Jim Crow was at the ranch the night those cows were stolen at Remuda."

The foreman scratched his head, one eye closed. Buzz McKee was sitting on the corral fence, talking with Sleepy, and Small called to him:

"Buzz, was Jim Crow here the night them hundred cows was stolen from the Box 88 at Remuda?"

"No, he wasn't, Ed. Don'tcha remember, he went to Cinnibar the day before and got drunk?"

"That's the answer," replied Small. "I never gave it a thought before."

"I wonder if he went to Cinnibar alone."

They walked over to Sleepy and Buzz McKee, and Small asked Buzz if he knew who went to Cinnibar with Crow.

"Tony Castro from the Quarter Circle

JNB," answered Buzz quickly. "I saw 'em when they came back to Tonto Wells."

"I think we better go to Tonto Wells," said Hashknife soberly. "I'd hate to have them two whipoorwills flit out of the country, before I get a look at 'em. Want to ride in, Small?"

"We'll all ride in," replied the foreman quickly. "Buzz, you find Sid, while we saddle up. I'll tell Cash where we're goin'."

A few minutes later the five riders were galloping toward Tonto Wells, hoping to intercept Jim Crow. His sudden exit from the IE ranch indicated that he was leaving that range as fast as possible. There was no doubt in Hashknife's mind that Jim Crow was pulling out, rather than to be recognized by him.

They rode into Tonto Wells and tied their horses at the Blue Bucket hitch-rack. It was quite dark at the hitch-rack, but Ed Small recognized Jim Crow's horse and saddle, with the war-sack tied on behind the cantle. They entered the Blue Bucket, but Jim Crow was not there. Lonesome Pine, the deputy, was there, but he had not seen Jim Crow. He was curious about them coming to town in a body, and why did they want Jim Crow?

No one told him; they just stood around. Finally Hashknife and Ed Small went over to the general store, but Jim Crow had not been there. Two more nearby saloons failed to disclose Jim Crow; so they went back to the Blue Bucket, feeling that Jim Crow would come back there.

"How about keepin' an eye on his horse?" asked Small. "One of the boys can—"

The sound of a shot stopped Ed Small. The men all looked at each other.

"Sounded like it was behind this place," said Sleepy.

"More likely out in front," said Small. "C'mon."

As they reached the doorway they heard Buck Foley's voice, calling to someone.

"It was over here by the rack! I saw the flash of the gun."

THE horses were all excited at the hitch-rack, as the men from the saloon ran out there. Buck Foley was callin' for a lantern, and one of the men brought one from the saloon. Hashknife quickly untied Crow's horse and took it away from the body, handing the rope to another man, and walking back to where Buck Foley was on his knees beside the body.

It was Jim Crow, shot through the heart, and at such close range that his shirt was still smoldering. Crow's gun was still in its holster, and in his right hand, tightly clutched, was half of a twenty dollar bill. In the dirt beside him was a five dollar bill.

"Of all the damn things!" snorted Buck Foley, dusting off his knees. "Did somebody send for Doc MacLarey? Well, get him as quick as yuh can."

"This man don't need a doctor," said Hashknife, examining Jim Crow's face closely by the lantern light. "His right name was Jack Crowley, and he was wanted in Wyomin' for a murder."

Doctor MacLarey arrived, made an examination by lantern-light, and asked the boys to take the body down to his place. Buck Foley took Hashknife aside and questioned the tall cowboy, who told him about Jim Crow leaving the Evans ranch to prevent a recognition.

"These things get me to fightin' my hat," declared Foley. "Yuh say his name was Jack Crowley, wanted for murder in Wyomin'. Then who the hell killed him here? And what's the idea of that torn bill in his fist?"

"I'm just guessin', Buck," replied Hashknife, "when I say that he came here to collect some money. Somebody paid off at the hitch-rack, and when Jim Crow

reached for the money, this pay-off party blasted him through the heart. A five dollar bill was dropped, and the dyin' man's grip shut down, forcin' the killer to tear that bill in half."

"Yeah, that's reasonable. But why was the payment made, and who made it?"

"Buck," replied Hashknife quietly, "if we knew that, you'd have a boarder tonight."

"Yo're damn well right, Hartley! But I'll tell yuh, we're havin' too many men shot down. One corpse don't get cold, before we git a fresh one."

They went down to Doctor MacLarey's house, where the doctor was busily engaged in recovering the bullet from Jim Crow's body. The effects from the dead man's pockets were of no consequence. Nor did his war-sack contain anything worth while. They were smoking and discussing the case, when the doctor came into the room, bringing the bullet, which had been washed and polished.

"Gentlemen," said the doctor, "in all my professional days, this is the second silver bullet I have removed from a body."

Hashknife examined the bullet closely. It seemed to be nearly pure silver. He looked quizzically at the doctor, as he said:

"Doc, would yuh mind tellin' us where and when yuh found the first one?"

The doctor leaned against the doorframe, slowly rolling down his sleeves.

"It was about sixteen years ago, if I remember correctly, and the corpse was that of a man named Mose Leach. You remember that case, Buck."

The sheriff was examining the bullet, but looked up and nodded.

"Yeah, I remember Mose Leach," he said.

"It's too bad we haven't that other bullet," said Hashknife.

The doctor laughed shortly. "I have it," he said. "Steve Bailey was sheriff at that time, and he gave it to me as a souvenir. I'll get it, Hartley."

He came back in a few minutes, bringing the silver bullet in a small box. He handed it to Hashknife, with the remark that it was tarnished a little. Hashknife compared the two bullets carefully. Finally he looked up at the sheriff and doctor.

"I've heard," he remarked, "that Cash Evans was suspected of that Leach killin'."

"And always has been, in the minds of some people," replied the doctor.

"Then this will exonerate him," said Hashknife. "Both of these bullets were fired from the same gun. Take a look at this mark on both, will yuh. That gun barrel had been sawed off, and the owner never bothered to burnish off the burr just inside the barrel. Gentlemen, both of those bullets bear the same signature.

"By God, yo're right!" exclaimed the sheriff. "Any jury on earth would recognize that, Hartley. And it's a cinch that Cash Evans never shot Jim Crow. Find a man with a sawed-off six-gun and—"

"Silver bullets," added Hashknife. "No, Buck, I'm afraid it will take more than that."

"Doc, I want both bullets," said the sheriff. "They're good evidence if we ever find the man who's gun signs its name."

Buck Foley put both bullets in the little box, and he and Hashknife went back to the Blue Bucket. The Evans crew were ready to go back to the ranch. Hashknife said to the sheriff:

"Don't say anythin' about those bullets, Buck. Let's keep this under cover, if possible."

"If you say so, Hartley," agreed the sheriff. "This sure ought to make Cash Evans happy."

Hashknife asked the boys to wait a few minutes, and went over to the hotel, where he wrote a short letter and posted it. On the way out to the ranch Sleepy asked him to whom he had written in such a hurry.

"Oh, I just dropped a note to Bob Marsh, tellin' him what was goin' on, and sendin' him yore best regards, Sleepy," replied Hashknife.

"You could have left off the best re-

gards," said Sleepy. "Anyway, I think yo're lyin' about what yuh wrote."

"I know I am," laughed Hashknife, "but I had to tell yuh somethin'."

THE next day, sitting in the *patio,* where no one could overhear them, Hashknife told Cash Evans what happened in Tonto Wells. He told him who Jim Crow really was, and told him all about the two silver bullets. Cash Evans was silent for a long time. Finally he said:

"Hartley, I never was much of a hand to ask for things. I've never cared much for public opinion. I realize that a lot of people think I killed Mose Leach. I am glad that the truth has come out, because that is somethin' I've hoped for, but never expected to happen. I thank you."

"Don't thank me, Cash; thank the killer, who was fool enough to sign two silver bullets, sixteen years apart."

"I hope he can be found. But I don't understand why anyone should be paying him off. Pay-off for what?"

"Perhaps Jim Crow was helping someone steal yore cows," suggested Hashknife.

Cash Evans' big hands clenched slowly on the arms of his chair.

"Yes," he agreed quietly. "That might be true. But do you believe in that theory?"

"I'm afraid not, Cash," admitted Hashknife.

"I didn't think you did."

Laura came out to get some flowers, and spoke to both of them. After she left the *patio,* Cash Evans said, "Hartley, what do you think of my children?"

Hashknife started to reply, but Cash stopped him.

"I want the truth—or nothin'," he said quietly. "It won't hurt me."

Hashknife began rolling a cigarette, and after awhile Cash Evans said:

"Thank yuh, Hartley."

"Don't blame the boy and girl too much," said Hashknife.

"I don't. I suppose I was foolish to want them here. But I know that there's truth in the sayin' that blood is thicker than water. Doc says I've got a bad heart. Yuh never can tell when it might quit. I kinda thought that I'd like to have my own—oh, hell, what's the use of all that! You'll go when yore time comes—and not before.

"I don't need a fortune teller to tell me that all they want is my ranch and my money. I've heard 'em talkin'. They don't like you. Don't ask me why, Hartley. They'd have left long ago, if it hadn't been they're afraid I'd change my will."

"Who has that will now?" asked Hashknife.

"I have it. It's right in my little safe, signed and sealed. This ranch and everythin' on it is worth a lot of money, Hartley. I've got plenty in real cash. More than anybody thinks. You know why they call me Cash? Of course, yuh do. Everybody does. I don't trust banks. One went busted and I lost all my money. Small-town bank. To hell with 'em."

"In case anythin' happened to you, could the money be found?"

Cash Evans laughed. "I hope so, Hartley; but not until I die."

THAT afternoon Hashknife and Sleepy rode with Ed Small in a brief tour of the Evans range. There were quite a number of Box 88 brands, on which the Bar V had been legally vented. There were also a number of Quarter Circle JNB brands along with the IE, belonging to Cash Evans. Hashknife had made a study of brands, but made little comment on these.

Fred Evans spent most of the day in Tonto Wells, and came back, filled with liquor. He accosted Hashknife near the *patio* gate.

"Oh, you're still here, eh?" he remarked sarcastically. "Well, well!"

"Yo're drunk," said Hashknife. "Go sleep it off, pardner."

"I'm not drunk," declared Freddy. "And if I am, it's none of your damn

business. Why don't you get on your moth-eaten horses and pull out. I'd be ashamed to impose on a blind man."

Hashknife smiled. "You must be terribly ashamed, Freddy," he said.

Fred was neither too drunk nor too dumb to get the point of Hashknife's remark. His eyes flashed and he dug his hands deep in his coat pockets.

"Hartley," he said in a brittle voice, "you better take your companion and leave this ranch—at once."

Hashknife leaned forward, studying Fred's face. "Growin' horns—and at yore age!" he exclaimed. "Don't do it, *amigo*; or you'll get 'em sawed off. This is a man's country—and you don't qualify."

"Why, damn your soul!" rasped Fred. "I'll—"

He tried to jerk his right hand from his coat-pocket, but Hashknife's two powerful hands grasped him and nearly yanked him off his feet. Cloth ripped, as Hashknife tore Fred's hand from his pocket, a twist of his wrist and Fred yelped with pain; and the next moment Hashknife's left palm smote Fred across the cheek, knocking him almost into the *patio*, where he landed in a sitting position.

Hashknife opened his right hand, disclosing a small, short-barrel revolver, bright nickel finish, with pearl handles.

"The teeth of a sidewinder," remarked Hashknife quietly. Laura was standing just beyond Freddy, staring at Hashknife.

"Sorry, Miss Laura," said Hashknife, "but the boy forgot his manners."

Fred got slowly to his feet, one side of his face crimson from that powerful, stinging slap.

He was still dazed, confused and unable to say anything. His right hand fumbled at his torn coat.

"Never try to pull a gun from a coat-pocket, Freddy," advised Hashknife. "Yore life might depend on it, and a fraction of a second on the draw makes the difference between life and death. Anyway, I'd advise *you* to never carry a gun. Maybe the next man won't even try to take it away from yuh—while yo're alive."

Without a word Fred turned and walked to the house. After a moment, Laura followed him. Ed Small and Sleepy, standing in the bunkhouse doorway, saw all the action, and they grinned widely, as Hashknife came down there, dangling the cheap revolver in his hand.

"Hartley, that sure surprised me," declared Small. "I didn't think he had nerve enough to even pack a gun."

"A pot-metal thirty-two, with pearl handles!" exclaimed Sleepy.

Hashknife told them that Freddy was drunk, when he accosted him, but seemed quite sober, when he went into the house. A little later Cloudy, the cook, came down and asked Small to hitch up the buggy team and take Laura to Tonto Wells. Then he said to Hashknife:

"The boss is up there on the porch, and he wants to see you and Sleepy."

"We'll be right up, Cloudy."

"Uh-huh. Say, what the hell happened between you and Freddy? I heard him raisin' hell about it to the boss. You shore must have hurt his feelin's, Tall Feller."

"He got off damn lucky, if yuh ask me," said Ed Small.

"That's too bad," murmured the cook. "Some folks is born lucky."

HASHKNIFE and Sleepy walked up to the wide front porch of the ranch-house, where Cash Evans sprawled in an easy chair.

"You sent for us," said Hashknife.

"Yeah," replied Cash Evans, rubbing his stubbled chin, "I wanted to talk with yuh, Hartley. You had a run-in with Fred this mornin'."

"That's right," agreed Hashknife. "He tried to pull a gun on me, and I took it away from him."

"Oh!" exclaimed Evans quietly. "I didn't know that."

"The gun's on a shelf in the bunkhouse," said Hashknife. "He can get it

any time he wants it; but I'd advise him leavin' it there."

Cash Evans nodded, sighed audibly and settled back in his chair.

"They gave me an ultimatum, Hartley," he said slowly. "They told me that either you and Sleepy must leave here—or they would."

Hashknife smiled. "That kinda makes it necessary for us to leave."

"Yeah," said Cash Evans. Then he lowered his voice. "Stay with the job. I'll keep in touch with yuh."

"Well, all right, if that's the way yuh want it," said Hashknife, loud enough to be heard in the house. "We'll be pullin' out right away."

"Thank yuh," whispered Evans. They walked off the porch and went to the stable, where they saddled their horses.

Sleepy went up to their room and secured their war-sacks. Laura was ready to get into the buggy, as they rode past, heading for the main gate, but did not look up. Freddy was on the porch, leaning against a post, watching them leave the ranch.

"Well, it didn't take *them* long to get off the place," he said to Cash Evans.

"Son," remarked Cash, "real men act quickly."

Fred's face flushed and he went back into the house.

On the way to Tonto Wells, Hashknife and Sleepy met Cal Parks in a buggy, on his way to the ranch. They waved to him as they went past, and Parks looked curiously at the war-sacks on the back of their saddles. It did not require much time for Hashknife and Sleepy to get settled at the hotel again.

They went down to the sheriff's office, where they found Lonesome Pine, half-asleep, with his big feet on the desk-top.

"I seen yuh go past, packin' yore war-sacks," he sighed.

"Glad to have us back among yuh?" queried Sleepy. Lonesome shook his head.

"Nope," he said. "You two are bad luck. We go along peaceful like, with one killin' in years and years. Then you two show up, and *whim, wham, bam!* Man for breakfast most every mornin'."

"We didn't have anythin' to do with it, Lonesome."

"It's shore funny, though. You show up at Remuda, and immediate a man gets killed and a hundred cows are swiped. You come over here. *Wham!* Tex Neeley grows wings. *Bam!* Jim Crow grabs hisself a harp. Who's next?"

"Mebbe you," suggested Sleepy.

"Hu-u-uh? Me? What have I done?"

"What'd the stranger do?" countered Sleepy soberly. "What did Tex do, and what did Jim Crow do? Dig into yore past, Lonesome. That question is one that you've got to answer for yourself."

"My Gawd, yo're cheerful!" exclaimed Lonesome.

BUCK FOLEY, the sheriff, came in, shook hands with Hashknife and Sleepy and welcomed them back to Tonto Wells.

"I came past the hotel, and they said you was back," he explained. "Didn't yuh like the Evans ranch?"

"We kinda hanker for the city," replied Sleepy.

"Yo're like Tex Neeley was," said Lonesome. "He hankered for the city — and look what he got."

"They just moved him to a bigger place," said Sleepy soberly.

"You've got to go out to the Beaudry place tomorrow, Lonesome," said Buck. "We've got to have a check on their beef and hides. Beaudry said he wanted to make a shipment of hides soon, and said it was easier to check hides out there than it is to tear the bundles apart here."

"I git all the hard work," complained Lonesome. "Countin' hides! And they shore smell!"

"Let's ride out with Lonesome tomorrow," said Hashknife. "I've never been to the Quarter Circle JNB."

"All right," agreed Sleepy. "But don't ask me to count hides."

"It's too damn bad about you fellers," growled Buck. "Can't even stand the smell of a cowhide!"

"I'll help yuh, Lonesome," promised Hashknife.

"Much obliged. You do the countin' and I'll keep the tally-sheet."

ED SMALL brought Laura to Tonto Wells, and waited while she did some shopping, but Hashknife did not get a chance to talk with Small. Later in the evening Cal Parks found Hashknife at the hotel. He wanted to know why Hashknife and Sleepy left Evans' ranch.

"They told yuh at the ranch, didn't they?" asked Hashknife.

"Yes," admitted the lawyer, "but I wanted both sides."

Hashknife smiled slowly. "Meanin'," he said, "that you don't believe what yuh heard out there?"

"I'd like to hear both sides," replied Parks.

"That's from bein' trained in law," smiled Hashknife.

"Well, I heard that Fred Evans threatened you with a gun."

"That's right, Parks. But he lost the gun, part of his coat, and got his face slapped. Did you hear that part of it?"

"I got most of my information from Fred," said Parks meaningly.

"What's wrong with Laura and Fred?" asked Hashknife. "Why did they want us away from that ranch, Parks?"

"I didn't know they did—until today; but I don't know their reason."

"We'll let it go at that," said Hashknife. "The way they act, you'd almost suspect that they're stealin' Evans' cows."

"That's ridiculous, Hartley."

"Yeah, and there's a lot of ridiculous things—and people—around this town, Parks. And they're goin' to look a damn sight funnier, before this thing is over."

Hashknife walked away, leaving the lawyer staring after him, a puzzled expression on his face.

THE Quarter Circle JNB ranchhouse was a rambling, old frame building in a grove of live-oaks. The stable was huge, there were a number of other ranch buildings, one of which was used as a slaughter house, giving a certain air to the place. A flock of crows swept up from the corral fences, as Hashknife, Sleepy and Lonesome Pine rode in at the old gateway. A couple of mangy dogs barked at them, but became just a pair of tail-waggers, when the riders came close to the house.

"There's Tony Castro and Tom Woods," said Lonesome, as two cowboys came from the stable, looking curiously at the three riders.

"Hyah, officer," called Tony, a slight, undersized cowboy, as they came up to the stable. "Didn't know who yuh was at first."

Woods, a big, hulking cowboy, came up and grinned at Lonesome.

"Huntin' somebody, Lonesome?" he asked. "See yuh got a posse."

"Came out to check the hides, Tom," he said. "Meet Hartley and Stevens. Boys these two are Tony Castro and Tom Woods. Where's Beaudry?"

"Him and Sam and Ellis are some'ers out in the hills," replied Tony.

"Ort to be home pretty quick," added Woods. "Git down and rest yore laigs, gents."

They dismounted and dropped their reins, followed by the usual formality of rolling cigarettes.

"Smells like hell around here," observed Lonesome.

"Livin' in town has made a sissy out of yuh," said Woods. "Them hides are stacked in the stable, and I hope yuh don't have to bust all them bundles, 'cause it's a hell of a job packin' 'em again."

"Law's law," said Lonesome.

Tom Woods went on to the bunkhouse, while Castro went to the stable with them.

The hides had been folded once, hair side out. Lonesome went down through the bundle, moving each hide enough to catch the Quarter Circle JNB brand. Hashknife was watching him closely. Suddenly he said:

"Let me have that one, Lonesome."

Lonesome shoved the hide over to him, and Hashknife opened it, raw side out. He looked closely at it, turned and looked at Tony Castro.

"How long has this sort of thing been goin' on, Castro?" he asked tensely.

The skinny cowboy's eyes narrowed and he began backing away, his hands held away from his sides.

"Wait a minute!" snapped Hashknife. "I asked you—"

"Look out, Tom!" yelled Castro, and went for his gun.

Sleepy and Lonesome went flat on the ground, as Castro clawed the gun from his holster. Hashknife did not seem to hurry. His gun came up, blasted once, a deliberate shot, and Castro's gun and part of his right hand went spanning. Screaming a warning to Tom Woods, and a curse at Hashknife, Castro went to his knees, nursing a shattered right hand.

Tom Woods did not need the second warning. He sprang out of the bunkhouse, a rifle in his hands, and his first hurried shot tore into the door behind Hashknife, who promptly went into the stable, along with Sleepy and Lonesome.

Castro got to his feet, ran back and picked up his gun, expecting to shoot left-handed, but Sleepy's .45 went off, and Mr. Castro went down, nursing a busted leg.

"Throw it as far as yuh can, Tony," ordered Lonesome, and the thin cowboy, spouting bitter profanity, obeyed.

Tom Woods was behind a corner of the bunkhouse, watching the stable doorway, his rifle ready for business, as three riders swept into the place, yelling at Tom, asking what was the matter.

"They got Tony!" he yelled. "That damn Hashknife Hartley, Jeff! He examined them hides. And you better git under cover, too."

Which they promptly did.

"What was wrong with the hides?" Lonesome asked.

"Nothin'," grinned Hashknife. "I just acted funny, and they fell for a bluff. Lonesome, here's where Cash Evans' cows have gone, and here's where them Bar V's was due to die."

"How in hell could they?" asked Lonesome.

"Easy enough. They took that IE brand and made it into a quarter Circle JNB. It's so darned easy, I don't see how you fellers ever let 'em get away with it. And yuh can easy alter a Bar V to the same brand. They butchered the animals, and altered the brands. All you looked at was the hair-side. I'll betcha they hair-marked 'em, instead of usin' an iron; so it would look old."

"Did you find some altered brands?" asked Lonesome.

"I didn't—but I will. And they know darned well we'll find 'em."

"If we live to examine 'em," added Sleepy. "It's four to one."

A RIFLE bullet came through the side of the stable, about knee-high, and smacked into a stall. The three men sprang up on the sides of a stall, while shot after shot, all about the same elevation, came splintering through the wal.

As soon as the shooting ceased, Sleepy ran across the stable and swung up on a harness peg, his feet planted on a two-by-four brace.

"Got a big knot-hole up here," he told them. "One of yuh get over by that door. If they try to leave the house and surround this place, we've got to throw lead real fast. If we have to, we can pry a board off the back of this old stable."

Hashknife stepped over beside the doorway, gun in hand.

"Look out now!" said Sleepy. "There's one on the far side of the house, and he's

goin' to try and make a break. Watch him! There he goes!"

The man had started to run from a corner of the ranchhouse, and Hashknife leaned out, exposing his right arm and shoulder, as he sent two bullets at the running man. The man leaped high, as the first bullet clipped his shirt front, landed on his heels and tried to get back, when Hashknife's next bullet struck the ground and showered him with gravel. Hashknife's bad shot was caused by a rifle bullet, which came from a window, and tugged at his sleeve.

But the man had dived headlong in getting back behind the corner. Their three horses, frightened a little by the shooting, came past the stable, dragging the reins, and disappeared around the stable.

Lonesome had gone to the other end of the stable, looking the place over, and now he came back, asking that they behold what he had discovered. It was a Winchester .30-.30, which Lonesome had found, hanging on a saddle. Examination showed six cartridges.

"Man, that's a soap-mine!" exclaimed Hashknife, as he worked the lever and found it in fine condition.

The shooting had ceased, but the men in the stable watched closely, realizing that Jeff Beaudry and his men would try some move. Sleepy found a crack at the rear of the stable, and brought the news that all three horses were back there in the shade.

"Just what's to be done?" queried Lonesome. "We're all cooped up, and so are they. Comes night, and they can either get away or make us wish they had. It's only thirty miles to the Border, and if they get a runnin' start in us, we'll never catch 'em."

"There's Castro over in the corral, tryin' to catch a horse," said Sleepy. "One-legged and one-armed. Boy, you've got nerve, I'll say that much for yuh. Oh-oh! Look out for that kickin' bronc! Yeah, you better crawl under the fence."

"No catchum bronc?" queriod Lonesome.

"No catchum," replied Sleepy, dryly, peering through the knot-hole.

"He-e-ey!" yelled Sleepy, almost falling

off his perch. "There's four riders goin' up to the ranchhouse! What in the devil!"

HASHKNIFE and Lonesome risked a look through the doorway. The riders were Ed Carson and three of his boys from the Box 88. Len Harris was the only one Hashknife knew. The front door of the ranchhouse was open, and all four men had lifted their hands. Slowly their hands came down, unbuckled belts, and let them fall beside the horses. Then they slowly reined to the left and rode around the house out of sight.

"Now, what the hell does that mean?" queried Lonesome.

"Mean?" snorted Hashknife. "They're gettin' mounts to head out of the country. C'mon!"

Regardless of the fact that a bullet might get them at any time, all three men started on a run toward the house, with Hashknife in the lead. Before they reached the corner of the kitchen they heard the beat of running hoofs. Rounding the corner they almost ran into Carson and his men.

Two hundred yards away, racing toward the brushy hill, went Beaudry and his men. Hashknife snapped a shot at them with the rifle, before they disappeared, but the shot went wide. Ed Carson and his men were looking at Hashknife, Sleepy and Lonesome, their jaws sagging.

"For Heaven's sake, what's goin' on?" demanded Carson. "We stop here to make a friendly call—and they stick us up and take our horses."

"Find Tony Castro," said Hashknife. "He's down at the stable, with a smashed hand and a busted leg. Have him tell yuh how they altered the brands on yore cows, Carson."

"We'll never get 'em, Hashknife!" blurted Lonesome. "Hell, they'll be in Mexico before sundown."

"Altered the brands on my—" began Carson, but the three men were running down to the stable, where they mounted and raced back toward Tonto Wells.

"Of all the crazy actions I've ever seen!" exclaimed Carson.

"Let's find Tony Castro," suggested Len Harris.

They recovered their belts and guns, after which they found Tony, hiding in a willow patch behind the corral. Tony was pretty sick and frightened, refusing to talk at first. But when he knew that the rest of his gang had left him, he talked plenty.

"Them yaller quitters!" he gritted. "If it hadn't been for me, they'd all go to jail. I tried to shoot it out with that damn Hartley, and I yelled a warnin' to Woods. What do I get for it? Not a damn thing."

"Yuh got a bad hand and a busted leg," said Len dryly.

"Yeah, I shore did."

"So you and the rest of them sidewinders stole my cows, eh?" said Ed Carson.

"Hell, yeah! We'd have kept on stealin' 'em, if that blasted Hartley hadn't come here and spoiled the deal. I told Jeff we ort to get rid of him, but they said that he wasn't any smarter than Buck Foley and Lonesome Pine. The hell, he wasn't! He spotted them hides right away. Can't yuh git me to a doctor, Carson? I don't want to die until I've told the law that Beaudry killed Tex Neeley."

"Find a team and hitch up to that wagon," said Carson. "Damn it, I don't know yet how yuh altered a Bar V to a Quarter Circle JNB. Hell, a new brand don't look like an old one, Castro."

"If yuh use a razor, yuh can shore make it look old enough," groaned Castro. "We done the same to the IE, only it was easier."

SLEEPY and Lonesome had no inkling of what Hashknife had on his mind, as they raced toward Tonto Wells. Lonesome was sure that Beaudry and his men were taking the shortest route to the Border, leaving their ranch and everything, in order to save themselves.

Hashknife knew that there was no chance to intercept Beaudry and his men, in case they did head straight for the protection of Mexico, but he was playing a hunch. He led the way off the main road just before they reached Tonto Wells, circled widely and came in behind the sheriff's office.

They bunched together and came in between the office and a small store, crouching low, as they reached the edge of the board sidewalk, which was about two feet above ground level at this point. From here they could see the front of the Blue Bucket Saloon.

"Yuh don't figure they'll come here, do yuh?" whispered Lonesome.

"If they don't, we're sunk," replied Hashknife.

A moment later they heard the sound of hoofs on the hard-packed street, and they heard Buck Foley, in his doorway, only twenty feet away, call, "Hyah, Jeff!"

Then the four riders came into view, riding slowly. Beaudry waved at the sheriff, but the faces of all the riders were tense. Beaudry turned to the right, heading for the Tonto Wells Bank, while the others went to the Blue Bucket hitch-rack, where they dismounted. There was nothing hurried about their actions. No one seemed to observe that they were riding Ed Carson's horses.

But Woods, Brent and Voigt did not go

to the Blue Bucket Saloon as usual. They were stalling for time, pretending to examine one of the horses, but were alert to every movement on the street.

"All right," said Hashknife tensely. "Single file, ten feet apart, and I'll go first. At their first move, start shootin'."

Hashknife leaped to the sidewalk, with the others behind him, and they began walking up toward the bank, moving rather fast. Voigt turned his head and saw them, heading for the bank. Without any hesitation Voigt drew his gun, yelling to the others:

"Look out! There they are!"

Voigt's first shot smashed through the window of the general store, dropping a shower of glass on the sidewalk. Sleepy and Lonesome fired so close together that it seemed one report, and Voigt stumbled back against a horse, clutching at his right shoulder.

But Woods and Brent had no intentions of fighting it out on the main street, and were mounting as swiftly as possible. Sleepy fired again, and his bullet scored the rump of Woods' horse, which immediately bogged its head down and pitched into the horse Brent was trying to mount.

Brent got into his saddle, minus his reins, which had been torn from his grasp, and Woods' horse collided with the hitch-rack and went down in a heap, throwing Woods into the street. Other horses tore loose from the rack, adding to the confusion, while Brent's horse whirled in circles, as Brent tried to stretch out and grab the flying reins.

Hashknife reached the doorway of the bank, just as Jeff Beaudry, gun in hand, sprang out, his left hand clutching a bunch of currency. But before Beaudry could use his gun, Hashknife dived into him, locked his long arms around Beaudry's waist, and they crashed together off the high sidewalk, Beaudry's gun flying one way, while currency flew the other.

The wind was all knocked out of the owner of the Quarter Circle JNB, and Hashknife sat up, gripping his victim's wrists tightly. Sleepy was sitting on Woods, threatening to pat him on the head with his six-shooter, while Lonesome, gripping the reins, threatened to make a sieve out of Brent, if he made another move. Voigt was out.

Buck Foley came running, while there was a general exodus from stores and saloons along the main street, drawn by the shots and shouting. Foley reached Hashknife, who grinned and asked him to put handcuffs on Beaudry, who was still dazed, his eyes full of dust. Others gave Sleepy and Lonesome a hand with their captives.

"Don't ask questions, Buck," panted Lonesome. "These birdies have been stealin' cows for months, and we've got 'em cold."

"That's a lie!" rasped Beaudry. "I tell yuh, it's a lie. Yuh can't prove a damn thing, you damn liars!"

Woods and Brent refused to talk, as the wondering sheriff hustled them off to jail. Voigt was badly, but not dangerously hurt. He cursed Beaudry for wanting to come to Tonto Wells and draw money, before going to Mexico.

"I told him we'd run our necks into a rope," he wailed bitterly, "but he said we'd beat Hartley and the others to town, 'cause Carson and his gang would—oh, hell, what's the use of sayin' what we might have done."

BUCK FOLEY looked curiously at Hashknife. "How'd you guess all this, Hartley?" he asked.

"It was the only answer," smiled Hashknife. "When I found that the Bar V, the IE and the Quarter Circle JNB all branded on the right side, it was a cinch to figure out the alterations. They kept the cows under cover, butchered at night, and all they had to do was doctor the brands after the cow was skinned. All they had to do was to fool you and Lonesome."

"Yeah," nodded Foley dryly, "that's all

they had to do. My Gawd, Jeff Beaudry! Can yuh imagine that! But what about Carson?"

"Carson and two of his men rode up at the ranchhouse, while the three of us was in the stable, swappin' shots with Beaudry and his gang in the house. They didn't know anythin' was wrong, until Beaudry and his gang took their horses away from 'em, and headed out here."

"I'm a centipede's uncle!" exclaimed Foley. "Here comes Carson and his gang in a wagon!"

Cal Parks, the lawyer, rushed up and pumped Hashknife's hand.

"I knew you'd do it!" he exclaimed. "You've certainly saved the Evans ranch a lot of money! What a cleanup! It—it just goes to show that crime doesn't pay."

Then they crowded around the wagon, where Tony Castro cursed all of them and demanded medical treatment.

"So yuh got 'em all, eh?" he said. "Good! By God, they left me to the wolves, and I won't forget it. Git me to that doctor, will yuh?"

The stage from Cinnibar drove up, but no one was interested in the stage or the mail. Voigt and Castro were taken down to Doctor MacLarey's place, and Hashknife and Sleepy went down to the sheriff's office.

"I'll tell yuh, I didn't know what was wrong, when Voigt shot at you fellers," said the sheriff. "I was in the doorway of the office. Hell, I'd just said howdy to 'em, as they rode past. And it was all over before I even had a chance to help out. But, as far as that's concerned, yuh didn't need any help. Jeff Beaudry, of all men!"

"If I was you," said Hashknife, "I'd get a statement from Castro. He's mad enough to tell the whole thing, Buck. He told Carson that Beaudry killed Tex Neely."

"But—but you found the evidence, Hartley."

"No, I didn't. I suspected it. When I started to ask Castro about it, he yanked his gun. The evidence *must* be there, but I didn't find it."

"Well, I'll be a liar! You didn't—"

Lonesome came in with the mail, and handed the sheriff a telegram, which he read carefully. He shoved his hat back and rubbed his chin.

"Damned if this ain't funny!" he snorted. "Read it, Hartley."

It was from Tucson, and read:

> MY BROTHER FRED WENT TO REMUDA BUT AM UNABLE TO LOCATE HIM. MAY BE IN TONTO WELLS. WILL YOU LOCATE HIM AND HAVE HIM WIRE ME. ANXIOUS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM. LAURA EVANS.

Hashknife studied the telegram, a frown between his eyes.

"Laura Evans hasn't had time to go to Tucson, Buck," he said. "I don't understand this telegram. Mebbe yuh better find Cal Parks and ask him."

"He was at the post office when I left,"

said Lonesome. "I'll bring him down here."

In a few moments Cal Parks came in with Lonesome.

"What a cleanup!" he exclaimed. "Who would ever have suspected Jeff Beaudry, Buck?"

"Hashknife Hartley," said Buck dryly. "Here's a telegram that came in on the stage. Mebbe you can figure it out—we can't, Cal."

Cal Parks eyes widened, as he read the wire. He licked his lips and read it the second time.

"Damned if I understand it," he muttered. "Laura Evans? She isn't in Tucson."

"Seems that she must have lost track of Freddy," said Hashknife.

"Why, I don't understand," protested Parks. "I'm going right out to the ranch. I'll see you all later."

It was after supper that night, when the boys from the Evans ranch came to town. Ed Small found Hashknife and Sleepy at the hotel and told them that Cash Evans was anxious to see them, and *wanted* them to come out to the ranch that night.

"Parks told him most of what happened today, but Parks was excited and maybe he didn't get it all straight. I reckon the Old Man wants to know the whole story."

"Did Parks come back from the ranch?" asked Hashknife.

"Yeah, he left there before supper."

"All right," smiled Hashknife, "we'll ride out and see him."

HASHKNIFE was very thoughtful, as they rode out to the ranch, and Sleepy asked him what was the matter.

"Oh, nothin' much, except that maybe a scheme went wrong. We'll find out later."

They tied their horses outside the ranchhouse and went up on the big porch. A lamp was lighted in the main room. Laura opened the door and smilingly invited them in.

Cash Evans was sitting in his big, easy chair beside the table, while Cal Parks leaned against the fireplace. Fred Evans was sitting on the edge of a table, a deep frown on his face. As Hashknife started to speak to Evans, Parks surged away from the fireplace, covering both Hashknife and Sleepy with a revolver.

"Put 'em up—quick!" snapped Parks. There was nothing else to do, with that gun muzzle only ten feet away; so they slowly lifted their arms.

"Get their guns, Fred!" snapped Parks.

With fumbling fingers, his face shallow in the lamplight, Fred removed the guns from their holsters, and took them away. Parks laughed, as he, too, backed away. Hashknife looked at Laura, and saw horror in her eyes.

"I couldn't help it, Hartley," said Cash Evans.

"What's it all about?" asked Hashknife calmly.

"You ask that?" sneered Parks. "As smart as you are—and you don't know what this is all about? Your little game is up, Hartley."

"My game?" queried Hashknife. "I don't get the idea, Parks."

"Innocent as a lamb, eh? That wire from Laura Evans was your work. You poor fool, Laura Evans has been dead eight years. Chew that over and see how it tastes."

Hashknife smiled, but made no comment. Hashknife's calmness irritated the lawyer.

"You thought you'd trap Cal Parks, eh?" he sneered. "Thought you'd bust up my scheme to own this ranch and get even with Cash Evans. Well, we may not win—but it's a cinch you won't, Hartley."

"No," said Hashknife, "I don't believe you'll win, Parks."

"You won't know whether we do or not. When the boys come back tonight they'll find you and your nosey partner and Cash Evans, all dead. Oh, we'll make it look like a battle, and I'll defy Buck Foley to ever find out what happened."

"Can you stand an investigation?" asked Hashknife.

Parks laughed harshly. "I'm supposed to be in Tonto Wells right now. Who can say I'm not. Laura and Fred will go in as soon as the job is finished. Who can tell when it happened? You were all together, when they left. And it won't look like a job that those two could do."

"Clever enough," said Hashknife. "Goin' to use silver bullets?"

"Damn you, you figured that out, too, eh? What else do yuh know?"

"I know that you hired Jim Crow to murder the real Fred Evans, after you wired him to get off at Remuda, and I know that you murdered Jim Crow, when he came to you for his pay the night he got scared of meetin' me and left this ranch."

Cal Parks' knuckles were white, as he gripped that big gun.

"If you know all this, why didn't you have me arrested?" asked the lawyer.

"I couldn't prove it, Parks. For instance, I know that sixteen years ago you murdered Mose Leach, with the same gun you used to kill Jim Crow."

Cash Evans straightened up in his chair. He was facing Parks.

"Sort of a jolt, eh, Cash?" sneered Parks. Cash Evans was silent, his face white in the lamplight. Parks continued, evidently pleased at the expression on Cash Evans' face.

"Years ago Cash Evans and I loved the same girl—but he got her. I followed them over here. I wanted to get even with Cash Evans. It has taken a long, long time. I helped her get away. I thought maybe she'd marry me—some time. But that's all past now. I stayed to get even with Cash Evans. When he wanted his two kids I knew he couldn't get 'em both, because Laura was dead.

"Fred wrote me. He wanted to come back and see his father; so I asked him to get off at Remuda. Damn him, I had to stop him, 'cause I already had a Fred Evans right here. You know the story; so you won't have to do any more guessin'. I'm sorry that Cash Evans is blind, because I'd like to see his eyes, when he looks into this gun muzzle."

Cash Evans lifted his head, apparently looking straight at the lawyer.

"Look at 'em, Parks," he said huskily. "Look at 'em, 'cause it's the last pair of eyes *you'll* ever see."

Cash Evans' right hand came from under his cushion, the lamplight flashed on a blued revolver, and in a split second it thundered in that closed room. It seemed as though a terrific blow struck Parks in the face, driving his head against the tall mantle, and he crashed to the floor.

AT THE same moment Hashknife was fairly flying through the air toward the thunderstruck pseudo son of Cash Evans, crashing him against the wall. Fred made a frantic effort to protect himself, but Hashknife's clubbing right fist crashed against his weak chin, and he went as limp as a rag. Sleepy was saying:

"Hold it, sister! You start goin' places, and I'll treat yuh just like I'd treat a man."

Laura slumped in a chair and covered her eyes.

"Good shootin', Cash. Square between the eyes," said Hashknife.

Cash Evans coughed slightly from the acrid sting of powder-smoke and placed the gun on the table.

"But—but, he—he's blind!" exclaimed Sleepy. "How in hell—do you mean to say that he *guessed* where to shoot?"

"A man with one eye can still shoot," said Hashknife.

Cash Evans looked at Hashknife closely and said:

"How did you guess that, Hartley?"

"That was easy. How could you separate a hundred dollars in currency from that pack of money, the night you gave us the money, unless you could see?"

"I forgot about that," said Evans slowly.

"You better go get the sheriff."

"Plenty time for that," said Hashknife. "Why did you play blind? To trap Cal Parks?"

"He told you his story, Hartley. He thought I trusted him; so I gave him plenty of rope. I—I wanted to clear my name in that Mose Leach shootin'. The poor fool! I knew that my daughter was dead; knew that my wife was dead. I gave Parks plenty of rope, didn't I?"

"And snubbed him up tight—at the finish," nodded Hashknife.

"You—you knew that we were masqueraders?" asked Laura in a whisper.

"My dear girl, I even knew that you and this foolish young man were man and wife, and that you used to be on the stage. I listened. But I won't prosecute you. As soon as your husband is able to travel, you may leave here. You've helped amuse a crabbed old man, who doesn't see any too well."

"A snapshot, square between the eyes," said Sleepy. "That's good enough for me."

"Can you handle this situation, until we can get the sheriff?" asked Hashknife.

"I haven't done so bad, so far, have I?" asked Cash Evans curiously.

Hashknife and Sleepy walked out and mounted their horses. They were both a little weary from the incidents of the day.

"You knew a lot of things, Pardner," said Sleepy. "You even knew that Cash Evans wasn't blind. But you never told anybody."

"I wanted to see what sort of a game he was playin', Sleepy. You can always learn a lot of things by keepin' yore eyes open—even around a blind man."

"But what about that telegram from Laura Evans?"

"Remember the night I wrote that letter to Bob Marsh? I enclosed what I wanted sent to the sheriff. I thought it might hurry things along."

"More rope for the calf, eh?"

"The last inch," replied Hashknife soberly.

He swung around in his saddle and looked at the distant range under the moonlight. Sleepy looked, too. After a while, as their horses' hoofs clicked along over the hard road, Hashknife said:

"Kinda pretty, eh? I been lookin' at 'em several days. But we've got to get the sheriff first and send him out to the ranch."

"Sure," agreed Sleepy, "we've got to find him first. More dog-gone red-tape."

Train for a beginning position in 8 to 10 months—detailer's position ($130-$225 a month) in 14 to 18 months.
Draftsmen
Needed in All Lines
Architectural • Automotive • Aviation
Diesel • Electrical • Structural • Mechanical
The Draftsman is the connecting link between the Mechanic and Engineer—earns exceptionally good pay—enjoys wonderful opportunities for promotion. Steady work because everything built or made starts with drawings.
Employment Service FREE to Students
Learn quickly at home in spare time. No experience or artistic talent needed. School established 1897. Low tuition. Monthly payments. Write TODAY for FREE Bulletin and facts about Selective Employment Service. No obligation. Address
American School, Dept. DD-139
Drexel Ave. at 58th St., Chicago, Ill.
APPROVED BY NATIONAL HOME STUDY COUNCIL

The Guy Who Knew Too Much

By H. S. M. KEMP

Author of "Death on the Air," "Two Strings to the Bow," etc.

"You Mean You're Arresting Me for Murder? . . . No—for Shooting Ducks Out of Season"

SPRING was just around the corner in so far as the Pine Lake country was concerned. The snow was getting patchy in the timber; it had well-nigh left the portages and had altogether disappeared through the honeycombing ice of the lake itself. Ravens and the odd crow squawked around the settlement, picking at the garbage that the baring ground brought to light; and at noon the wind felt almost warm.

But that didn't mean the trading season was at an end. To the Miller-Thoreau Trading Company—Ike Miller of Winnipeg and Frenchy Thoreau of the hinterlands of Quebec—it meant that the busiest season of all was at hand. Miller and Thoreau had still plenty of debt out among the Indians, and with Mallory of the H. B. C. and Anderson of Revillons to make it a three-way fight, the man who cinched the fur was the man who came out on top.

Down in the sprawling, log-walled store Ike Miller was getting a trading outfit together. It was to be a six-dog load for the outpost at Sucker Point. Thoughtfully, mindful of weight, Ike Miller laid out his sugar and his tea and his ammunition; and whether or not he wanted help in his task, he got it, gratis. Two or three time-killing Indians suggested fish-nets and shotgun shells; Corporal "Pogo" Brown of the Mounted Police mentioned a smattering of dry-goods, some ribbon, candy for the kids. Ike Miller, who was nearing fifty and putting on beef, scrubbed his chin.

"It ain't what to take," he pointed out. "It's what to leave behind. And me, I ain't figurin' on runnin' all the way."

His partner, Frenchy Thoreau, who was spare and sinewy, showed white teeth in a smile. "Better you let me go deese trip. My feet, she ain't heavy lak' yours."

Ike Miller nodded. "But how 'bout that trip of yours to town?"

Corporal Pogo Brown turned to Frenchy. "You going to town?"

"Fo' sho'," grinned Frenchy. "Ike, he have his leetle bust last mont'. Now I see what I can do."

"Spring trade coming on, and you going out for a bust," observed the corporal. "A swell time for it."

Frenchy sobered somewhat. "No; it ees not dat way. I'm go out buy goods for Treaty and have 'em ship' in on first open water." He hesitated, grinned bashfully. "And den dere is somet'ing else. I'm get married soon. De gal—don' she lak fo' me to buy two-t'tree t'ings fo' wedding?"

"Getting married?" Pogo Brown seemed surprised. "Who's the lucky lady?"

"Ah!" grinned the French-Canadian. "Wouldn't you lak fo' know!"

Pogo Brown would have liked to know very much; but the knowledge was to be denied him at the time being. The door of the store opened and Gus Hanson and his halfbreed partner, Peter Bear, walked in.

The smile died on Frenchy's lips. Ike Miller looked up, scowled when he saw Gus Hanson; looked across at Corporal Brown. The corporal was the only man who gave Hanson any greeting. "Howdy!" he said.

Corporal Brown needed no explanation for the silence that now had fallen across the place. He knew for himself. Two months before, Gus Hanson had walked in just as he had done today. He had had a gun in his hand then, and had demanded forty dollars for one of his dogs that Ike Miller had caught in a fox-trap and subsequently had to shoot. Corporal Brown hadn't been there at the time, but the story got around. There had been words, more words; then Ike Miller had snatched the gun from Hanson's fingers and had pounded the man to a senseless pulp. Gus Hanson was a hulking, raw-boned customer, but Ike Miller was bigger, and tough.

And now Gus Hanson was back.

CORPORAL BROWN waited. He saw Hanson slouch toward Ike Miller, wondered what would happen; then relaxed as the man drew himself up to sit on the counter. With cool disdain Ike Miller turned his back and went ahead with the trading-outfit.

A moment or two passed. The corporal felt a growing tension. The Indians smoked in silence, and in silence Frenchy Thoreau began to roll a cigarette. To break the spell, Corporal Pogo Brown

went back to the matter of Ike Miller's trip to Sucker Point.

"Don't haul more than you have to, Ike. Tough traveling these days."

"Days, yeah," agreed Miller. "But nights she ain't bad. She freezes up solid about eleven o'clock. And I got to think of something—a few pair of moccasins for the dogs."

"Never mind a few pairs. Take plenty."

"To Sucker River and back? She's only a two-day trip."

So far, neither Gus Hanson nor his partner had said a word. Hanson was whittling at a plug of tobacco; the partner, Pete Bear, merely watched Ike Miller at his task.

"If it's only two days," observed the corporal after a while, "you ought to let Frenchy go. He's built for light-track work; and two days will give him plenty time to be here to catch the plane." Then he remembered the broken conversation with the French-Canadian of a few moments before. "Yeah, Frenchy; how about it? You were going to tell me the lady's name."

Frenchy grinned teasingly. "What fo' you want to know? You t'ink mebbe to cut me out?"

"I couldn't cut anybody out," Pogo Brown assured him. "All the girls run a mile when they see me coming."

Frenchy smiled at the policeman's freckled features, at his generous mouth, pug-nose and carroty hair. "De gals," Frenchy said oracularly, "don't worry about d' face. Dey fall for d' red coat." Then he added obliquely, "How you t'ink of Marie Duncan?"

"Marie Duncan!" Pogo grinned broadly. "Boy," he admitted, "you got something there!"

For Pogo Brown knew Marie Duncan. Marie, at twenty-two, was emphatically the belle of Pine Lake. Her father was a Scotch-halfbreed pensioner of the Hudson's Bay Company and Marie was the apple of the old man's eye. Slim, petite, dark. Marie had long since knocked all the local boys for a row of teepee-frames.

"Nice going, Frenchy," applauded the corporal. "But if I promise not to cut you out, do I get the first kiss at the bride?"

"First kees? Well," grinned Frenchy; "dat first kees, he's long tam gone. Mebbe you askin' me!"

Suddenly, Gus Hanson slid down from the counter. He turned, fished a folded mink-skin from his pocket and threw it across to Ike Miller.

"Gimme some shells," he ordered. "Some .30 Specials."

Ike Miller gave a short grunt. ".30 Specials? What's the matter with the H. B. C.? Or Revillons? Sold out?"

"D'you think," growled Hanson. "I'd come to you if they wasn't?"

Miller picked up the skin, looked it over, tossed it down again.

"What's it worth?" asked Hanson.

Miller shrugged. "'Bout that," he said carelessly. "Three-fifty; the price of a box of shells."

Hanson's face darkened. "That's a six-dollar skin, and you got to sell me the shells at the reg'lar price."

"Yeah?" Ike Miller's heavy, blue-shaved jaw was as hard as Hanson's own. "Sure I got to sell 'em; and I'm sellin' 'em to you same's I sell 'em to anyone else. Sure I got to sell," he reiterated, with a glance at Corporal Pogo Brown. "But the law ain't got no say in what I like to pay for fur."

HANSON glared at him. He spoke, through his teeth, and his voice seemed to shake. "You're a dirty robber, Miller, but you got me where the hair's short. Gimme the shells and lemme outa here."

Again Pogo Brown looked for trouble. Gus Hanson was enraged enough for anything. His partner, halfbreed Pete Bear, seemed to be siding him. The 'breed was watching Frenchy Thoreau with narrowed eyes and tightened lips. But the moment

passed. Ike Miller lifted a box of cartridges from the shelves, tossed them across, and picked up the mink-skin.

"Come and see me ag'in—" he told Gus Hanson, "any time the H. B. C. ain't got what you want."

With the door closed behind Hanson and his partner, the corporal lit a cigarette. Pogo Brown had a way of saying bluntly what he thought. Now what he thought he said to Ike Miller.

"I didn't care for that bit of business very much."

Ike Miller scowled. "Didn't, eh? Why?"

"It was just what Gus said—you had him where the hair was short, so you horsed it to him."

"And why shouldn't I horse it to him?" flared Miller. "I don't like him and never did!"

"So one day you beat him up so bad he had to lay in camp for a week."

"What of it?" retorted Miller. "He was heeled—totin' a gun and me unarmed! I took the chance; not him. And ever since, he's been runnin' around and shootin' off his mouth."

"I know," admitted Pogo. "He's a dumb sorta cluck—"

"Dumb! He ain't dumb; he's crafty. Try and get ahead of him, and see where you finish up!"

"You got ahead of him," pointed out the corporal.

"But mebbe I ain't finished. Anyhow," growled Miller, "you needn't start preachin'. Why didn't you run him in—the time he came gunnin' for me?"

"Because," answered the corporal, "you never laid a complaint, and because I always thought you were big enough to look after yourself."

Frenchy Thoreau grinned. Ike Miller clumped away into the connecting warehouse. At last the corporal said he'd be getting along. The fire in the detachment would be burning low, and there were the dogs to feed.

But he went back to the Miller-Thoreau post early the next day. An Indian told him that Ike Miller had passed up the trip to Sucker Point and that Frenchy Thoreau had gone instead. The corporal found Miller at the house, engaged in papering the kitchen wall. Pogo grinned at him, noticing the sweat that ran down his face.

"Thought better of it, did you?" he ribbed him. "Figured that chasing dogs in the spring was too tough for a fat feller like you."

Ike Miller wiped away the sweat with his shirt-sleeve and scowled at the kitchen stove. On the stove walloped a kettleful of glue-like flour-and-water.

"Never mind about chasin' dogs bein' too tough for me," said the man. "But with all the stuff Frenchy wanted me to take—well, Frenchy's legs are younger'n mine and I wasn't runnin' all the way."

"I figured you were a bit ambitious," grinned the corporal. "Thought so when I saw you putting up your load." He looked around him. "Cleaning house?"

IKE MILLER shut the damper on the cookstove, wiped sticky paste from his fingers and pulled out a plug of chewing.

"Sort of," he admitted. "Frenchy's all right and the house is all right—for a couple bachelors and a squaw cook. But a gal like Marie, well, she wouldn't feel right in no hog-pen like this."

"So you'll fix a little love-nest, fix it nice and cute and pretty—" The corporal broke off, grinned. "Sounds like a chunk out of 'Hiawatha.'"

"Dunno about a love-nest," grunted Miller. "But I aim to do what I can. I told Frenchy the place needed dungin' out, and I'll do more while he's away in town. That is, if I get the time." Ike pointed to the grease-stained door and the spotty wall-boards. "I got paint in the warehouse. A few quarts'll sorta spruce things up."

"Curtains in the windows would help," suggested the corporal.

"Sure. But Frenchy can bring them in when he comes."

After a moment the policeman said, "I wanted a can of smoking. Too busy to give it to me?"

Ike Miller pulled a ring of keys from his pocket and told him to get it himself. "I wanted to finish this blamed job today. It's more of a chore than I figured."

Pogo Brown suddenly decided that he himself wasn't very busy, and he suggested to Ike Miller that he could lend a hand. So it was that a half hour later, dressed in his khaki slacks, the corporal was learning the fine points of papering a kitchen wall.

AS THEY worked, Ike Miller got over his grouch. Soon both were exchanging opinions on how the place could be improved generally. "If it was me," said the corporal, "I'd fire that old cupboard out of here and put some new oilcloth on the table."

"Yeah," agreed Miller. "And them tobacco-stains on the wood-box don't look so cute."

Together they planned a rejuvenation that would give the old building a look of jauntiness.

"Me," confessed Ike Miller; "I don't know whether to live on here or not. You know the way she is—young folks sorta like to run things to suit themselves. I'll try her; but if I feel in the way, I'll run me up a little shack out back some place and just come in here to eat."

By noon the kitchen was papered. The squaw had shown up and prepared dinner. Ike Miller invited the policeman to stay, and just as they were sitting down they saw the post dogs and a man who appeared to be Frenchy Thoreau himself swing around a nearby point and turn from the ice into shore.

"What's up?" asked Ike Miller. "And what brings Frenchy back?"

The corporal frowned. "He couldn't have made the trip. It's fifty miles each way."

And then, together, both exclaimed, "That's not Frenchy." And Ike Miller added, "It's Henry Paul!"

THEY got up from the table, stood in the doorway, waiting. They saw the man, the Indian, Henry Paul, stop the dogs at the store and walk toward them. The corporal remarked that the sleigh was still loaded. Ike Miller's jaw was hard.

"Something's happened to Frenchy. The ice—?"

"No," said Pogo Brown. "The ice is solid enough yet."

The Indian was at the doorstep now. Miller nodded to him and told him to come in.

"What's up?" he asked, as the Indian pushed the door shut behind him.

The Indian didn't know, but he gave them the gist of things in his own language. Boiled down, at sunrise that morning, the man had come across the dogs as he was visiting his traps. The dogs were alone, sprawled out on the ice in Tamarack Bay. He had thought little of it at the time, surmising that either Frenchy or Ike Miller was somewhere handy in the bush. But when he returned an hour later and the dogs were still there, he had become moderately alarmed.

"How was the ice?" put in Ike Miller. "Solid?"

"*Kispukow*—thick!" said the Indian. "No, it wasn't the ice. And then I saw something that did alarm me. Blood, on the canvas wrapper of the load; blood, and a few black hairs."

Something crawled up Pogo Brown's spine. "Hairs? What sort of hairs?"

"Hairs," said the native, "that might have come from an Indian's head. An Indian's," he reiterated"—or a Frenchman's like T'oreau."

Ike Miller shot a harsh glance at the policeman. He grunted two words—"Let's see!"

They went out the door, strode off to where the harnessed dogs were lying. The

Indian followed. And when they got there they saw things for themselves—

Blood—and a few black hairs.

CORPORAL POGO BROWN visualized the scene. Tamarack Bay was ten miles distant, on the way to Sucker Point. It was also a scant mile this side of the camp of Gus Hanson and his halfbreed partner, Pete Bear.

"And what did you do finally?" he asked the Indian.

The Indian, a man of forty-five, told him. "I did the only thing I could do—drove the dogs in here."

The corporal turned to Ike Miller. "There wouldn't be any chance of Frenchy being up at Gus Hanson's camp?"

"He wouldn't be there," decided Ike Miller. "Not . . . with Gus away."

The Indian understood English whether he chose to speak it or not. He said, "But Gus *was* at his camp. He stayed there last night."

The corporal frowned sharply. "Last night?" he echoed. Then he asked, "How d'you know that?"

The Indian told him. "I was into the camp on my way down, just before I found Frenchy's dogs. I thought Gus or Pete might be there and I dropped in for a drink of tea and a smoke. But though they had camped there that night, they had gone already."

The corporal did not ask the Indian how he knew this. It would be from the warmth of the place, the ashes in the fireplace, the smell of tobacco. Instead he asked him, "And you don't know where they went?"

"Yes," agreed the Indian, Cree-fashion. "I don't."

The corporal and Ike Miller held council. Nothing was to be gained in keeping the dogs in harness, so Miller let them loose after having them drag the loaded sleigh into a warehouse.

"This looks bad," said the corporal. "Frenchy, by some means, musta have got a crack over the bean. But where is he?"

"Yeah, where?" agreed Miller. "Glare ice don't leave no tracks." Then he added, "Figure that dog of yours could turn him up?"

The corporal doubted it. The dog was a year-old German Shepherd that the policeman was teaching to trail by scent. Other dogs of the breed were employed by the Mounted Police authorities all across the Dominion. These were carefully selected dogs and carefully trained. The Miggs dog of Pogo's was little better than a pup and had never been given a thorough workout.

"He'd never track anyone on ice," Pogo decided. Then, thoughtfully, he added, "But mebbe it wouldn't be altogether on ice. If Frenchy was laid out by anyone, he was skidded ashore. If we took around the shore, we might finally cross his tracks."

"Well," said Miller; "let's try it."

They ate a hurried dinner, shared it with the Indian, then went down to Pogo Brown's detachment. Here five big huskies yowled and lunged at their chains and a black-and-tan German Shepherd came bounding toward them. Pogo harnessed the huskies and slipped a chain around the Shepherd's neck. Then riding a steel-runner jumper, they struck off.

Miller had brought one of Frenchy's old moccasins along and he expected the

corporal to take to the shore at once. But this wasn't Pogo's idea.

"I've a notion that Frenchy won't be far from where Henry saw his sleigh. We'll start there and work back. It'll be quicker."

They reached the spot, left the dogs, and went ashore. There the corporal gave the Shepherd Frenchy's old moccasin to smell and started him off backtracking along the shore.

At first the dog got nowhere. It was as though he failed to understand. No scent-trail led away from the moccasin that Pogo offered him and he looked perplexedly into Pogo's face. But Pogo repeated with the moccasin, led the dog along, gave him a whiff of the moccasin again. And suddenly the dog understood.

HE struck off, nose down, towing Pogo behind him. The shore-line led around a point, wavered, struck east again. Here the sun had shone down directly nine hours of each day, and glare ice met bare rocks and sand. A mile from where he had started, the dog pulled up. He began to sniff around, to whine excitedly, to quicken his pace.

Suddenly he struck in to the bush. Here was no sand at all; ice and bare rocks blended. Here too was a big outcrop of white quartz; and at the foot of it, a strangely crumpled figure.

The dog's hackles rose, he growled his fear. The figure was that of Frenchy Thoreau. And Frenchy was stiff and cold.

As the other two crowded in, Corporal Brown gave a sharp order. "Don't come too close!"

He loosened the dog. It backed away. The corporal began to investigate.

First he looked at Frenchy. The back of the man's head was caved in as though with a rifle-butt. His clothing was torn. Clearly, he had been hauled across the ice and dumped there. There were no tracks, and the sun had melted any snow there might have been. Save for a few tufts of moss and dwarfish willow, all else was bouldery rock.

Corporal Brown's face showed his vexation. "It'd have to be that way," he growled. "An inch or so of snow would have given us a chance. As it is—" And he looked at Ike Miller, at the Indian, Henry Paul.

The Indian's features were stolid; Ike Miller's, tight-lipped.

"So what?" said Miller suddenly. "Can't you work on nothin' but tracks?"

"Tracks would have helped," admitted the corporal. "But it looks like we've got to get along without 'em." He nodded to the two men. "We'll carry him out and fetch the dogs."

They dragged the body to the shore-ice, where the corporal went through the dead man's clothing. "Don't suppose he had any money on him," he suggested.

"Only four hundred dollars," said Ike Miller. "He took that along in case he could pick up any fur for cash."

"Four hundred dollars," mused Corporal Brown. Then after a search of Frenchy's clothing he added, "Well, it isn't here now."

Ike Miller shoved forward. "Frenchy carried it in a black wallet in his hip pocket," he insisted. "I saw him put it there last night."

The corporal dug into both hip pockets. "No wallet, no cash. Mebbe he tucked it away on his sleigh for safety."

Ike Miller looked unimpressed. "Mebbe. We'll see when we get back to the post."

But no cash was discovered either on Frenchy's sleigh or elsewhere. Pogo Brown made a note of this, then turned to the more important matter of discovering who, and what, was responsible for Frenchy's death.

From Ike Miller he learned that Frenchy had pulled away from the settlement at about eleven-thirty of the evening before. Miller himself had helped Frenchy and the dogs haul the heavy sleigh over the bare ground to the lake-front; but once

on the ice, the dogs had gone off at a fast clip.

"That's a point I want to be sure of," observed Pogo Brown. "Did Frenchy stop anywhere in the village on his way out?"

Ike Miller couldn't tell. "If it'd bin a bit earlier, he might of dropped in to say so-long to Marie. But not that time o' night. Anyway," he suggested, "you could ask old Angus. He'd know."

Two or three Indians had drifted down to the post. They eyed the corporal's significantly-loaded sleigh; but if they guessed at tragedy, they asked no questions. The corporal had the dogs pull the sleigh into one of the post warehouses, and there he unloaded Frenchy's body. After that he drove to the whitewashed house of Angus Duncan.

HE WAS fortunate in finding the old halfbreed outside, splitting wood. Duncan was a man of seventy, with the graying, sandy hair of the Scot and the broad cheekbones and sloe eyes of the Cree. As the policeman halted his dogs, he leaned on his axe, nodded, smiled. Pogo, realizing nobody was within hearing, came straight to the reason for the call.

"Something," he said, "has happened to Frenchy Thoreau. He was killed last night —a mile or so this side of Gus Hanson's camp."

Old Angus frowned, stared at the policeman, shook his head. "Frenchy killed?" he repeated. "You mean, shot?"

"Clubbed to death. With the butt of a rifle, mebbe."

For a moment old Angus seemed to digest the statement; then, with a slightly-whimsical grin, he asked Pogo, "And Gus Hanson—what does he say about it?"

"Hanson doesn't say anything about it," replied the corporal. "Leastways, not to me. I haven't seen him yet." Then he asked the question that was uppermost in his mind. "Frenchy pulled out late last night on a trip to Sucker Point. Did he stop off here?"

"No s'far's I know," answered the old man at once. "I rolled in about ten; and Marie was upstairs, prob'ly asleep, before I was."

"And if she'd come down, you'd have heard her?"

"Well, I sleep kinda light." The old man drove his axe into a billet of wood, pulled out his firebag and began to whittle tobacco from a thick plug. "And Frenchy's dead," he observed. "Wonder what Marie'll say to that?"

Pogo frowned. "What she'll *say?* Good Lord, she thought something of him, didn't she?"

"I s'pose. Said she did. But gals of that age don't know their own minds for two days together."

"Frenchy was a decent chap," offered the corporal. "Everyone liked him."

"Oh? If ever'one liked him, he'd bin alive today."

Pogo grunted. He took a shot in the dark. "Did you like him?"

Old Angus shrugged. "As a man, sure. Folks said he was sorta wild; but that wouldn't be reason enough for anyone killin' him. Yeah; I guess Frenchy was all right."

The corporal waited a moment; then deciding that he had got from old Angus all that he was likely to get, he nodded and told him he would see him again.

But he did not go to the detachment immediately. There were two or three houses along the lake-front where Frenchy Thoreau might conceivably have stopped on his way out of the settlement; but when the corporal called at them, the residents could give him no help. All seemed to have retired at a respectable hour; and if Frenchy went by without harness-bells, they would not even have heard him. From one man, however, another Indian, he received apparent corroboration of the actual time of Frenchy's departure. Yes, said this man, he had aroused when his dogs began

to bay, and he had heard the sound of a steel-shod toboggan going past. The hour? *Apato tipiskow; midnight.* He had made up the fire at eleven-thirty; and when the racket roused him, the logs were still aflame.

Pogo nodded, thanked the man for the facts. It now seemed good policy to go up to Gus Hanson's and see what could be picked up there.

AS HAD been the case with Henry Paul, Pogo Brown found the cabin deserted. Unoccupied was, perhaps, better. For although neither Hanson nor Pete Bear was around, there was every indication that they expected to return. Much of their clothing was in place, their dishes and grub. Pogo looked around him; and although he had no authority yet for making a search, he decided to go ahead.

Thus he dug into a trunk in a corner, poked into cupboards, felt along the rafters and scrutinized the floor. So far as evidence was concerned that might connect either or both men with the murder, he found nothing. But then, he told himself, he could hardly expect to. Men who had murdered would leave nothing around on which to convict themselves. Better hunt for the less obvious things, the things that a man could be forgiven for having overlooked. And when he went into the trunk again and glanced over a bundle of letters and paper tied with a thong of moosehide, he wondered if he had found them. For the bundle was composed of love-letters, written by Marie Duncan to the halfbreed, Pete Bear.

The corporal frowned, looked a bit shamefaced, then decided to skim their contents.

The writing was awkward, the spelling full of errors; but it was evident that at one time Marie Duncan had been very much in love with the partner of Gus Hanson. There was mention of a future that excluded all other humans but the two of them, although, later on, the name of the girl's father crept in. By what she wrote, old Angus had other designs for Miss Marie. She was going out to civilization, to get more education; not to grow up, as the girl put it, like a Pine Lake squaw.

Pogo Brown, having read this much, was only too glad to put the letters away. He tied them again, placed them as he had found them in the trunk, shut the trunk and went out. There seemed to be little use in waiting for the return of the two men, for they might be gone for several days. So he headed once more for the settlement; only to find them there when he arrived.

They were in the Hudson's Bay post, buying a few provisions from Mallory, the company man. Mallory, a short, thickset Irishman, nodded as the corporal came in. The other two turned.

Gus Hanson spoke first. He said to Pogo, "Looks like Frenchy got his."

Pogo nodded. "You heard about it, eh? What d'you know about it?"

"I know it's a pity it wasn't the other guy. We could get along without Ike Miller."

Pogo studied Gus Hanson for a moment. Hanson seemed his slouching and undangerous self, but his pale-blue eyes held a passing hard glint.

"Who told you about Frenchy?" asked the corporal.

"Bill," said Hanson, indicating Mallory. "We made a swing after a moose that Pete hit the other day, and ended up here an hour ago."

The corporal's glance now embraced the halfbreed. Pete Bear looked more Indian than white, but he was handsome with it in a reckless sort of manner. Insolently almost, the man returned Pogo Brown's straight stare. "Figure we had a hand in things?" he asked.

"If I did," Pogo told him bluntly, "you'd be on the inside looking out. And don't start kidding yourself, either."

He cross-examined them both as to the time they left the cabin. They said at the

break of dawn, before six o'clock. They struck straight into the bush after the wounded moose and saw nothing more of the lake until they hit it today a mile or two below the settlement. They told him word had got around that Frenchy had been done to death with a rifle-butt, and they offered their rifles for inspection.

"Are you crazy?" flared Pogo. "What'd I want to see them for now? Tell me instead what time you pulled out of here last night?"

Hanson said at seven-thirty. He and Pete Bear had had supper with an Indian, one Mistikwan; and the Indian had seen them start on their way.

Pete Bear countered with a question of his own. He asked the corporal, "Where'd you find Frenchy?"

"Near that white-quartz outcrop—a mile or two this side of Tamarack Bay. You ought to know the place," growled Pogo.

"Shore do," agreed the halfbreed. "I pass it every time I go home."

Pogo felt suddenly irritated. It may have been Pete Bear's insolent manner, or it may have been the sudden realization that in the murder of Frenchy Thoreau he had so few real facts. He had the feeling that old Angus Duncan was not wholly enraptured with his prospective son-in-law, and he had discovered that Pete Bear was—and still might be—in love with Frenchy's girl. Pete might have beefed Frenchy out of jealousy or hate. But regarding a definite clue—well, he had nothing at all.

In disgust, he struck off for the Miller-Thoreau post again.

WITH Ike Miller he went over his few facts; and as he recited them a sudden thought occurred to him.

"I wonder," he told Ike, "if I've been barking up the wrong tree. Who," he asked, "besides yourselves, knew that Frenchy was taking this trip to Sucker Point in your place?"

"Who knew it?" echoed Ike Miller. "Well, I guess nobody did." Then suddenly his jaw stiffened. He glared hard at the corporal. "You mean—whoever laid Frenchy out figured they was gettin' *me?*"

"It's a thought, isn't it?" asked Pogo.

"Ain't it! And a blamed nice one!" Ike Miller continued to glare. "But who'd try to get me? Some dirty rat," he roared, "that didn't have the guts to do the job in the open!"

The corporal smiled. "We've all got our enemies, I guess. And if you're certain that nobody else knew of this switch in plans—"

"Nobody but us two," emphasized Miller. "Right up to eight 'r nine o'clock I figured on takin' the trip. Then Frenchy remembered that that Sucker Point gang had bin hollerin' for flour and grease all spring and he wanted to shove on another hundred of flour and another case of lard. I told him go ahead, haul what he wanted and take the trip himself. Yeah; that must have bin nine o'clock, for the woman had gone home already."

"Well; we'll have to work from your angle. Who hated you enough to want to see you dead? Gus Hanson, or his partner, Pete?"

Ike scowled. "I ain't got no use for either of 'em, but like to be fair. And Pete ain't no bushwhacker."

"And Gus Hanson?"

Ike seemed to wriggle. "Mebbe he ain't one either. He's crafty, and he'd like to see me dead; but I don't think he's got the guts for murder."

For an hour the two went over their problem. The corporal told Ike nothing of finding the packet of love-letters in Gus Hanson's camp, but this new angle of a potential attack on Ike Miller himself clouded the issue. If he followed the love-letter theory, he could not at the same time look for an enemy of Ike Miller.

"One thing sure," he told Ike Miller at last. "I've got to hold an inquest and send out a report to the Old Man. The chances are when he hears of it we'll have a flock

of Mounted Policemen piling in—all trying to do a job that I'm supposed to do myself."

IN THAT, Corporal Pogo Brown called the turn. If not a flock of policemen, at least two detective-sergeants and the O.C. came in to get to the bottom of the case. And when a week went by and they had achieved nothing, Pogo felt better. They left him at last, the O.C. telling him to keep eyes and ears open and wait for a break.

Keeping eyes and ears open included watching Gus Hanson and Pete Bear. The four hundred dollars that Frenchy Thoreau had carried on him that night had never turned up; and now, two weeks later, Pete Bear seemed suddenly to prosper.

Early summer had come, and the Indians had pitched-in from their winter camps. Pete Bear stepped out with Marie Duncan at all the dances, and the man was dressed better than he had ever been dressed before. The new suit of clothes, he said, had been purchased from Revillons; and he mentioned that he was ordering a new canoe from the Hudson's Bay. Pogo Brown interviewed both trading-store managers.

From them he learned that Pete had paid cash. He also learned that the halfbreed had made no great hunt and that they had wondered where the money came from.

Then suddenly Pete Bear was sporting a new rifle, and this had come from Ike Miller's.

"He's pretty foxy," Miller confided to Pogo. "He don't flash none of his money around here. He paid for the gun with a couple of marten and some mink he claims he's bin holdin' over since Christmas."

Stubbornly, Corporal Brown went to work on the halfbreed again. Asked about the money, Pete Bear said he had most of it saved up, but admitted having sold some fur to a cash-buyer a few months before. The story seemed straight, but Pogo had the feeling the man was laughing at him.

"He knows something," Pogo told himself. "He's lying—and I don't know what he's lying about. And I don't know whether it's himself he's trying to cover or Gus Hanson."

But a few days later word got around that the halfbreed and the Swede had had a row. Some said a fight. At any rate, Pete Bear moved into an unused cabin at the far end of the village and Gus Hanson went back to his cabin near Tamarack Bay. Now, said Pogo, if there had been anything between the two of them, it should come out. He looked up Pete Bear, tried to worm from him the cause of the trouble.

The halfbreed, showing a cut face, gave a crooked grin but refused to talk. When Pogo interviewed Gus Hanson on one of his periodic trips into the settlement, the Swede turned sullen, and morose. In anger, Pogo told the man that he'd find out all about it in his own sweet way. "And," he added, "I'll find out all about the killing of Frenchy Thoreau before I'm done."

He told Ike Miller this. "And I sure will!" he emphasized. "That breed knows more than he says. But if it takes me a year or ten years, I'll drag it out of him. Watch me!"

Then one night he walked into his detachment after a visit with Bill Mallory to find a note tucked under his door. It was written on a piece of wrapping-paper and signed "Peter Bear."

Pogo read it by the light of a gasoline lamp. It was a printed note, crudely done; but there was no mistaking its contents. It said, *"If you want to know who kilt frenchy come and see me after dark."* Then was added, *"But dont tell ike Miler."*

The corporal frowned as he read it. "Don't tell Ike Miller, eh?" He chewed his lip, stared at the wall, holding the paper in his hand. Again, "Don't tell Ike Miller. Good Lord!" he breathed. "Is that the angle I've overlooked?"

He moved swiftly. He picked up his

flashlight, turned out the lamp and struck off for Pete Bear's.

It was half a mile away, at the end of the village. The road ran by a straggle of teepees, and dogs rushed out barking at him at he passed. From the teepees came Cree scoldings, ordering the dogs to silence; but Pogo Brown scarcely heard the voices or the dogs.

"Don't tell Ike Miller. And I've been telling him everything!"

He reached Pete Bear's cabin to find it in darkness. He knocked, got no answer. The halfbreed might be asleep. Well, he'd soon wake him.

He opened the door, flung the flashlight's beam inside. He started violently. Pete Bear was on the bunk, but he could never be wakened. Someone had got there ahead of Pogo Brown.

HEART hammering, Pogo advanced to the bunk. One glance at Pete Bear and the corporal was aware of a sickening similarity between what he now saw and what he had found flung into the bush that morning near Tamarack Bay. Both Frenchy Thoreau and Pete Bear gone out with their heads caved in.

The halfbreed was lying cross-wise of the bunk and on his back. Blood had run over the Hudson's Bay point-blankets but none showed on the floor. Yes, Pete Bear had gone down the moment the blow had struck him.

Carefully, the corporal looked around. Nothing appeared to be disturbed in the place. The few items of clothing were hanging on nails. Trapping gear was piled in a corner and a rifle leaned against the wall. Without touching anything, the corporal threw his flashlight on the rifle, but the gun seemed clean and free from bloodstains. Nor was there any other weapon around, unless he included a pile of firewood lying beside the airtight stove in the center of the floor.

Satisfied that he had overlooked nothing for the present, the corporal went out and snapped into place the padlock that was hanging on its hasp. From there he went first to his detachment, then to Ike Miller's post. He found the man reading an old newspaper in a back-tipped chair in the kitchen. Without knocking he went in.

Miller looked up, heaved the paper to one side and told him to take a seat. Pogo noticed that Ike Miller was in his socks, and that in the light of the kerosene lamp he needed a shave.

"What's on your mind?" he asked the corporal. "Anything new?"

Pogo failed to take the seat. That generous mouth of his was tight and his freckled face was cold and unsmiling. Moreover, he was wearing his sidearms, a fact which up till now Ike Miller had apparently overlooked.

"Something's new," he told Miller. "Pete Bear. Murdered, in his shack."

If Ike Miller's start was acting, the man should have been on the stage. His chair came down with a thud, his head shot forward and his hard eyes bored into Pogo's.

"You mean that?" he grated. "Or are you just tryin' out my nerves?"

"Your nerves are all right," said Pogo. "They'll have to be. Read this."

He held the scrap of wrapping-paper forward so that Miller could see it in the light of the lamp. "Read it," he said again. "Aloud."

Ike Miller did so. *"'If you want to know who kilt Frenchy, come and see me after dark. Peter Bear. But don't tell Ike Miller.'"* He suddenly shot a savage glance at Pogo Brown. "What's this?" he snarled. "Some sort of a joke?"

"If it is, it's on you."

MILLER continued to glare at the corporal, then he dropped his eyes to the paper again. Once more he read it over. "What's it all mean?" he demanded at last.

"I'll tell you what it means," the corporal retorted. "Pete Bear wanted to see me tonight, apparently in connection with Frenchy's murder, but he was sort of fussy

that you shouldn't know anything about it. I went to see him, and I found him—dead in his shack, with his head chewed up."

Ike Miller's hard eyes narrowed. "I see," he said slowly. "Pete says not to tell me, so you don't. You go down there and find him dead. Puttin' two and two together, then, I'm the guy that killed him."

The corporal frowned. The cool manner in which the man summed up the case against himself left him feeling a mite uncomfortable. "Well," he countered; "what other theory can you offer?"

"Mebbe none," said Miller. "But I can sure upset the one you're nursin'." Then he cut the policeman's feet from under him. "This note," said Miller, tapping the piece of paper, "wasn't written by Pete Bear at all."

It was now Pogo's turn to stare, but Ike Miller held on.

"Pete was educated, kind of. There wouldn't have bin no need for him to *print* his letters. Cripes, he could write as good as you or me!" The trader suddenly swore a blistering oath. "Yuh get the idea?" he demanded of the corporal. "This note's a forgery—a forgery to put me in a bad light. You fell for it, like the feller who wrote it figured you'd do. And if it wasn't for me knowin' it's a forgery, what sort of a spot would it put me in?" Miller reached for the note again. "'Don't tell Ike Miller'," he repeated. "And why not? Suppose you did? D'you figure it would do me any harm?"

"No," conceded the corporal. "The whole thing looks like some sort of a frame-up."

"Sure it's a frame-up; so what're you goin' to do about it? Or d'you want me to start?"

"You start?" Pogo gave a faint grin. "Just where would you start?"

"I'd start on the guy that hates me worst—on the guy that's got most reason for seein' somebody else take the rap for a murder-job he did himself. Aw, I know," growled Miller stubbornly. "I know what you think—I don't like Gus Hanson and I'm always ready to figure him at the back of everything. But why shouldn't I? He's yaller and he's cunning, and he's just had a bad split-up with Pete Bear. You always claimed Pete knew more about this murder than he let on; and after this row, Hanson gets scared of him. So he kills him; and to protect himself he loads the blame onto me by that there phony note. Turn him over to me for ten minutes and I'll have him spillin' the beans!"

Pogo Brown chewed his lip meditatively. He had come up to Ike Miller's prepared to ask the trader some unpleasant questions—questions that were to be asked Pete Bear in reply to his note. Now, apparently, the note hadn't been written by Pete Bear at all. But Pogo agreed with Ike Miller on one point: Pete Bear was a guy who knew too much. So somebody had bumped him off.

"Well," he told Miller, "I'll make a start right now. And I'll let you know what comes of it."

HIS first place of call was Angus Duncan's house. The old man was alone, his wife and daughter being out to a dance. From him the corporal obtained a sample of Pete Bear's writing. It was one of many letters that the halfbreed had written to Marie Duncan some months earlier and which the girl had saved. A glance at the letter was enough for Pogo. The writing, while perhaps not as neat as his own, was legible, and the words were correctly spelled. Pogo thanked the old man, mentioned nothing about Pete Bear's sudden demise, and went up to call on Bill Mallory at the Hudson's Bay post.

He flashed the note on the company man and asked him if he had any idea as to who might have written it. "It wasn't Pete himself," he pointed out. "And Pete didn't disguise his handwriting. There was no need for him to, for he signed his name to it."

One glance at the paper, and Mallory said, "Sure. Gus Hanson."

"Gus Hanson, eh?" observed the corporal. "Why d'you think he wrote it?"

"No need to think," said Mallory. "I *know* he did. It's the only way he can write. I get notes from him all the time—bits of orders and one thing and another—and they're all printed like this one. I guess it's the only way he can write." The company man gave Pogo a quizzical stare. "What's it all about—or aren't you saying?"

"I don't mind saying," answered Pogo. "I got this note shoved under my door a while ago and did as it said—went down and called on Pete Bear. But somebody had got there before me. Pete Bear was dead."

Mallory looked shocked. "Murdered?"

"Sure. And that reminds me," Pogo went on. "Was Hanson by any chance in the village tonight?"

"Yeah. He's in nearly every day. Said he was going home after supper."

"After dark?"

"Either dark or getting along that way."

Pogo stood up, nodded. "And I'll be getting along, too. I want to check over Pete's cabin again."

The night was dark, but the air was warm. The ice had gone out some time ago and water lapped at the rocks along the shore. Thinking of water and Hanson's visit to the settlement prompted the corporal to go first to the beach in front of the halfbreed's cabin.

Here he found the mark of where a canoe had been dragged from the water. As Pete Bear's own canoe was still lying half in the water and a few yards away, this was plainly the mark of another. There was a mark, too, of where a man had jabbed his paddle into the sand in getting out of the canoe or embarking in it. And when, with a sweep of the flashlight, he looked a bit closer, he saw footprints—the marks of moccasin-rubbers, clean-cut and of a huge size. He broke off a piece of grass, measured them, then put the grass safely away.

He went into the cabin again, but another search showed him nothing that he had not already seen. Finally he locked the place and went to call on Bill Mallory once more.

He pulled out his piece of grass and told the Hudson's Bay man what he required. In the store they taped the grass against the soles of several pairs of moccasin-rubbers. They finally fitted it, to a number eleven.

"And who, for the love of Mike, wears a number eleven?"

"Gus Hanson again," said Mallory. "He wears 'em all the time."

"And Gus Hanson was in town this evening. Things," remarked Pogo, "are clearing up."

He went back to his detachment, put the motor on his eighteen-footer and slid off down to Tamarack Bay. Gus Hanson was apparently in bed and asleep. Pogo walked in, watched the man light a lamp, then hastily looked around. In a soapbox—cupboard above the bunk was a writing-pad and a black-covered memo-book. He picked up the book, opened it.

In the book, written in that peculiar printed style, Gus Hanson had kept track of things. There was a list of the fur he had caught the previous winter, notations of how much he owed Mallory and Anderson. In an effort to keep his accounts straight, he even marked down the disposal of each individual skin. So that against one mink-skin was the notation "ike Miler 3$ 50."

"Ike Miller," Pogo said to himself. "And again, only one 'l' in the 'Miler.'" Then turning to Hanson, he said, "Mind if I take this book along?"

Hanson glowered at him suspiciously. "What d'you want with the book?"

"Nothing much; only I want to borrow it for a few days. And about Pete Bear—did anyone tell you he'd been killed?"

Hanson blinked. "Eh?" he said gropingly.

"Yeah. Pete Bear. Someone murdered him. Know who it was?"

"Pete ain't bin murdered," said the man stubbornly. "I saw him—saw him in the village just before I come home."

"After dark?"

"Yeah."

"At his shack?"

"I wasn't at his shack."

"You weren't, eh?" Pogo couldn't quite tell whether Hanson was acting stupid or if the sudden wake-up was responsible. "Never mind about Pete, but get your clothes on and come up to the village with me. You'll know more when you get there."

Hanson started. "Y'mean—you're arrestin' me? For murder?"

Pogo wavered. "No," he said. "For shooting ducks out of season."

Hanson's eyes fell to the pair of mallards lying on the floor. "Why—we've always shot ducks outa season!"

"And there's always been a Game Act. But snap into it!" ordered Pogo. "D'you get dressed for the trip, or d'you go in your shirt-tail?"

Hanson seemed to know when the corporal had ceased to fool. He got into his clothes, his moccasins, his large-size rubbers.

THOUGH stubborn and persistent, Corporal Pogo Brown was also cautious to a degree. So now, though sure he had the goods on Gus Hanson, he wanted to check every point. Thus, before he locked Hanson up in the steel-latticed cell of the detachment, he had him shed his rubbers.

Pogo took the outsized footwear over to the lighted lamp on the table. He was struck first by their worn appearance. A hole showed in one of the toes and the tread on the bottom had long since been scuffed off. He turned to the man.

"This the best pair you could find?"

Hanson had been gloweringly watching him. "They're good enough for me. What's the matter with 'em?"

"Nothing, mebbe," answered Pogo. Then he added, "—if it don't rain. But where's your other pair."

"There ain't no other pair. Them's all I got."

Pogo studied him and was convinced the big Swede was telling the truth. But if Hanson were telling the truth, Pogo was out on a limb. The tracks that he had seen on the shore at Pete Bear's cabin were made by a fairly new, size eleven pair of rubbers. The tracks were clean-cut and the tread on the bottom showed plainly in the sand. He dropped the rubbers and once again pulled the printed note from his pocket. He studied it a long time; then a strange, uncanny thought came to him. Not having charged Hanson with the murder of Pete Bear, he could not allow him to make any statement that might prejudice him at the trail. But still, there were statements, and there were statements—

Corporal Brown turned to the man. "Did you ever write to Ike Miller about anything at all?"

Hanson gave a sneering grunt. "What'd I want to write to that slob for?"

"You never did?"

"No. Well—not for a long time."

"What d'you mean by a long time?"

"Four-five years. One winter I run a tradin' outfit for him up on Birch Lake. But he gypped me so bad I never tried her ag'in."

"You ran a trading outfit, eh?" Pogo squinted thoughtfully. "That means you'd have to keep books—write reports to him and such-like?"

"Sure. I guess he's got 'em yet. That guy don't throw nothin' away."

Pogo sat down at the table and compared the printing on the note with the printing in Gus Hanson's memo-book. So far as he could see they were identical and he would very much have liked to show Hanson the note and ask him what he thought about it. But this wouldn't do. This was where that warning statement came in.

Soon after he turned out the lamp and went to bed; but it was only at dawn that he got any sleep.

AND the next day was a busy one for him. He corralled a six-man jury, had them bring in an open verdict and then prepared for a trip to town. The bi-monthly mail-plane was due in that morning, and he decided to go out on her. To this end he appointed a hulking halfbreed, one Tom Henry, as his special-constable. Tom Henry's duties would be to take care of the detachment, feed the dogs and see that Gus Hanson got enough to eat.

Ike Miller, too, decided to go to town. He had his fur to sell, and the fur had already gone out on a plane two weeks before. Bill Mallory was another passenger. Bill's excuse to his district superintendent would be the time-honored one of getting his teeth fixed. So, when they landed, each went his separate way—Pogo to divisional headquarters, Bill Mallory to the nearest hotel, and Ike Miller to see about his fur. But of the three, Ike Miller was the only one honored with an escort—an unsuspected one; a plainclothes man who picked him up within ten minutes of Pogo's landing.

Two days later, Ike Miller got a call from Pogo. It appeared that the Old Man wanted a bit more dope in regard to the passing of Frenchy and Pete Bear and the events leading up to the arrest of Gus Hanson. Would Ike mind helping out? Ike said he'd be glad to. And it happened that when he came up to the O.C.'s office, Bill Mallory elected to trail along.

"I saw Ike and he told me," said Bill. "If there's anything I can add, well, here I am."

In the O.C.'s office, Ike Miller grinned at Pogo. "Thought you'd got all the evidence you needed?"

"Sure," agreed Pogo. "But it's the sort of evidence that could fit anybody."

Ike Miller seemed to lose a bit of his composure. "Fit who?"

"Well, Henry Paul, for instance—the Nitchie who first found Frenchy's dogs. He could have killed Frenchy before he came in that morning, and then had to bump off Pete Bear because Pete had got wise to him."

"Yeah," agreed Ike Miller. "Guess you're right."

"Then there's old Angus Duncan. He could have killed Frenchy to stop him from marrying Marie. He didn't care for him a lot. And Pete Bear might have got wise to *him.*"

Again Ike Miller agreed. He gave a dubious, "Sure."

"Then take yourself," grinned Pogo. "It could have been you."

Ike suddenly lost all his composure. *"Me?"*

"You could have rowed with Frenchy about something, beefed him, and then had to do Pete Bear in for the same reason those other two would have had to kill him."

Ike Miller nodded. "Sure. But I wouldn't write you no note like Pete Bear is supposed to have done. That note that Gus Hanson forged. A man'd hafta be a idjit to put the hemp around his own neck. And Bill here told me that he proved to you that Hanson wrote it."

"Oh, sure," agreed Pogo Brown. "That's no clue, anyway. And I've got no clue as to where you were when Frenchy was killed. Or when Pete Bear was killed." Ike Miller was looking queerly at the freckle-faced corporal, but Pogo went right on. "But if I really did want to pin you with this murder, I've one clue I could use. It's a honey, and it fits you like the paper on the wall. Like the paper," he said with slow emphasis, "on the kitchen wall—up at your Pine Lake post."

Pogo was expecting an explosion, and was ready for it. So were a couple of the police boys who had sauntered almost unnoticed into the room. Ike Miller, a fighting, cursing maniac, was pinned hand and foot before the O.C. got up from his chair.

EXCEPT for Ike Miller, Bill Mallory was, perhaps, the man most surprised at the turn things had taken. But these things were explained to him when he and Pogo walked townwards a half-hour later.

"What fooled me worst," confessed Pogo, "was the fact that I could never have thought of a reason for Miller killing Frenchy. But that cleared up all right. Frenchy only came to town once in every two or three years, and Miller wasn't expecting him to go out for a long time yet. This spring, Miller came to town and went on one gosh-awful bust. They tell me how he blew in five thousand dollars in three weeks. Five thousand dollars was about all the firm had in the bank, and half of that was due to Frenchy. So when Frenchy announced his intention of coming out this summer—buying trade-goods and all the trimmings for a wedding—something had to be done about it. For all his size, Miller was scared of Frenchy; Frenchy was the main cheese in the Miller-Thoreau Trading Company, and there'd have been the devil to pay. So Miller decided to take the easiest way out of the mess—by liquidating Frenchy."

Bill Mallory wanted to know, then, where Pete Bear came in.

"I'll give you a guess at that," said Pogo. "Pete went down to where we had discovered Frenchy and nosed into things. My guess is that he found something that tied Miller in with the murder. Frenchy probably never had that four hundred dollars on him as Miller said; but it must have cost Miller that much to keep Pete's mouth shut. Witness the new clothes, the new canoe and gun. And when Miller got tired of paying for silence, he got it another way.

"Ike Miller," continued the corporal, "said Gus Hanson was crafty. If Gus is any craftier than Ike Miller, I'll eat a horse. Ike worked things pretty smooth—switched the trip to Sucker Point, had Frenchy found near Tamarack Bay, and then had it appear that Frenchy must have been killed in mistake for himself. But he slipped up on one or two trifles when he beefed Pete Bear. He shouldn't have worn new rubbers, and he shouldn't have tried to forge Gus Hanson's writing. He made a pretty fair job of the forging, though. Handwriting experts disagreed over it. Two said the writing was Hanson's, a third said it wasn't. But the wrapping-paper he used fooled him. You don't know it, but I took a quick flying-trip home yesterday. By the use of a skeleton-key, I got into Ike's store and I got into yours." The corporal grinned. "I wanted wrapping-paper samples—from Ike's, from your place, and from Bob Anderson. I got 'em. Yours and Bob's are identical, forty-pound kraft; Ike Miller's is thirty. And as Gus Hanson never dealt with Ike Miller since the row over the mink-skin last spring, I couldn't understand how he had any of Ike's wrapping-paper in his shack to write a letter on."

Nearing their hotel, Bill Mallory remembered something. "Yeah, but—what about that other paper, the paper on the kitchen wall. What broke Ike up so bad?"

Pogo smiled grimly. "I figured that Ike killed Frenchy right at the post, loaded him on the toboggan and hauled him down to Tamarack Bay. He and Frenchy would never have started off together, or Frenchy would have figured something was wrong. So I began to mull things over; and I couldn't see why Ike Miller, knowing that Frenchy was dead, would go to all the trouble of papering the kitchen just to put on a show. So yesterday, I backed my hunch. I pried some of that paper off, and I found what I suspected. Bloodstains, Bill; lots of 'em. Frenchy was tough; it must have been the devil's own fight."

Before they parted, Bill Mallory smiled. "And what about Gus Hanson? Didn't you pull him for murder?"

"No," grinned Pogo wryly, "and was I lucky! I told him it was for killing ducks out of season. If it had been for murder—Bill," said Pogo, "the ducks will be laying some pretty big eggs just about now; but I almost laid the biggest of the lot!"

UNCONQUERABLE

By BILL ADAMS

Author of Many Stirring Tales of the Sea

I WONDER where he is today. He gave me the beginning of his story while we were walking out to the farm. "Twenty-fife I voss ven I leef Helsingfors," he began, and told me how he'd shipped in a little bark bound for England's North Sea coast. It was winter, the North Sea all foam-crested ridges and gale-driven sleet. When one dark morning the bark rolled over, bottom up, he had just time to jump overboard and swim clear. With the wreck lost in sleet, he clung to a floating plank. He was dressed in a dungaree shirt and trousers, with red woolen underwear. He'd kicked off his leather sea boots. He'd eaten nothing since the previous midday, but wasn't particularly hungry. He was cold to the marrow, but had often been cold before. At nightfall he had a vision of his elder brother driving the cows to the barn for milking. He'd left home because his parents' farm wasn't big enough to keep both him and his brother. All night the wind and sea raged in the sleety darkness. At noon next day a fishing smack picked him up. They questioned him, but, knowing no English, he couldn't answer. They gave him coffee, and a big plate of fried fish; but had no clothes to spare. The smack came to her dock that evening, just astern of a square-rigged ship. The smack's skipper called to the ship's mate, "Can ye use a man, Mister?" The mate called back that he was one man short of a crew. So the Finn went aboard the ship, and the mate, who was drunk, showed him the forecastle. He got into a bunk and went to sleep on the bare bunk boards. He'd often slept without a mattress. At

These Foreigners—They Are Hard to Understand

some time in the night the crew came aboard, drunk and shouting. No one paid any heed to him, and he went back to sleep.

At dawn the ship's second mate woke him, with a punch in the ribs. I was that second mate. I'd been ashore when he came aboard, and hadn't seen him till now. "Get out, the lot of you! We're going to sea!" I called to the others. The mate came along, saw the Finn, and growled, "What did I take that fellow for? I must have been drunk!"

Rain fell, on a bitter wind. All but the Finn had seaboots and oilskins. While we got the ship to sea, and later while we set sail, he was in everybody's way. The crew cursed him, the mate cursed him, but I cursed him more than anyone. I never did have any use for a foreigner.

When the mate and I picked our watches that night the Finn came to mine. Trust the mate to see to that! "Get forward and keep lookout! Sing out if you see any lights!" I told him. He stared at me, not understanding. I told one of my men to take him to the forecastle head and explain what he had to do. Pacing the poop in seaboots and oilskins, I stamped my cold feet and beat my hands on my sides. Soon I saw a ship's light ahead. There was no danger of hitting her, but I strode forward, grabbed the Finn and cuffed him; shouting, "Why didn't you report that light, you fool?" Then I looked into the forecastle where the others of my watch sat smoking and told one of them to take the Finn's place. A big Geordie went grumbling out, and in a minute I laughed to hear him kicking and cursing the Finn. The others wouldn't let the Finn enter the forecastle. "Stay on deck, ye lousy furriner, an' sing out if the second mate wants us!" they jeered. Till midnight the Finn stayed on deck, barefoot in his sodden clothes, in the wind and rain.

Next morning the skipper sent for the Finn. "Here, you! Here's seaboots and oilskins for you, and a couple of shirts, and socks. They'll be charged against your wages," he told him. The Finn shook his head; didn't want any clothes. "The fool's so close he won't spend his money," growled the skipper, mad because he couldn't make profit by selling the fellow some shoddy slop chest stuff.

Down channel and through Biscay Bay it was bitter cold; sprays driving over the decks, and the ship under shortened sail. The mate and I kept our men under the forecastle head, making robands, sheltered from the weather. But I kept the Finn out on deck, to polish the brass work and scour rust spots from the bulwarks. When there was any pully-hauly on the ropes he helped; or tried to. A lot of help he was, getting in everyone's way! All he got for his pains was curses. When off duty my watch made him wait on them, fetching the grub from the cook, taking the empty mess kit back after meals, washing their tin plates and pannikins, and keeping their forecastle clean. They rode him so hard that one day I said, "You boys'd best go a bit easy! He's bigger than any of you, and if he did start to get nasty—"

"He ain't got no more guts'n a flunkey, sir," replied a sailor, and pulled his sea boots off. Tossing them to the Finn, he said, "Go grease 'em, you!" The Finn smiled in a friendly sort of way, picked up the boots and went to greasing them. So it went till we ran into warm trade wind weather.

THE first dog-watch after we were in the trades, the hands gathered by the main hatch to wrestle. The Finn looked on with shining eyes. "Here you!" cried the Geordie, who'd wrestled and beat every man in the crew. Smiling his friendly smile, the Finn stepped to meet him. In maybe half a minute it was over. The Geordie couldn't do a thing with him. " 'Ee's crazy! Look at the way 'e's always a' smilin'! Crazy fellers is always strong," sneered the Geordie.

ONE night when a full moon made things almost clear as day I walked forward. My watch were snoozing in the lee of the deck house. The Finn sat alone on the hatch, with a rope over his knees. I guessed he'd been trying to learn how to splice, but he wasn't splicing now. He was staring down at something the moon glinted on in his hand. Hearing me approach, he slipped it into his inner pocket. "Look, Meester!" he exclaimed, and held the rope toward me. I couldn't have tucked a neater long splice myself! And then he tucked a short and an eye splice, made a grummet, and even fashioned a Matthew Walker. I thought, "If he wasn't a foreigner maybe he'd make a sailor some day!" Next morning while I set my watch to their jobs he watched me with eager eyes; hoping I'd put him to sailor work, too. "Get on and polish the brass!" I told him.

The trade wind fell away. The tropic sun blazed. Sweat dripped from his nose, ran down his brow and cheeks. His dungarees were soaked with sweat. The others worked in the shade of the sails, or under the forecastle head. But he polished brass and scoured rust spots away out in the sun. He grew so lean that you could see the muscles ripple beneath his white skin. It was queer how his skin stayed white, and his face pink as the day he came aboard. "'E's like a woman, blimey if he ain't!" sneered the Geordie, and all hands laughed.

We picked up the southeast trade wind and ran down it to the River Plate coast. There, wind and sea fell flat. Under full sail, the ship was still as a picture beneath the leaden sky. Dusk fell. There wasn't a sound. The watches sat in their forecastle, smoking in silence, as though awed by the stillness. I saw the Finn, sitting alone on the hatch, take something from his inner pocket and look down at it. Just as he put it back there came a blinding flash of lightning. Then, yelling like a million demons, the wind came. One of those *pamperos* you get off the Plate. The skipper ran from the chart room, shouting, "Let go royal and topgallant halliards! All hands on deck!"

"Aloft and make 'em fast!" bawled the mate, when the sails were ready for furling. All hands swarmed into the rigging. Last, with the Finn at his heels, went the big Geordie. Aware of someone close after him, the Geordie looked down. "Giv out uv it! 'T'is a sailor's job!" he shouted, and kicked at the Finn. Just as he kicked, the ship rolled heavily, and his other foot slipped on the bulwark beading.

"Man overboard!" I yelled.

"Down from aloft? Back the main yard! Get the boat away!" shouted the mate.

The skipper's voice came from the poop. "We can't send a boat away in this weather, mister!"

Gathered at the bulwarks, all hands stared out to the black sea. We could see the Geordie by the lightning flashes. It was plain he couldn't swim and would be gone in a minute.

There was a splash in the sea, and at the same moment a dazzle of lightning. And there was the Finn, swimming toward the screaming Geordie. "Get the boat away! If that man gets to the Geordie they'll be hours drowning. I can't stand for that," came the skipper's voice.

The lightning ceased while we were lowering the boat. The night was inky, but the ceaseless terrified yelling of the Geordie directed me to them. We hauled him in, and he lay moaning in the boat's bottom. But the Finn swung himself unaided over the gunwhale, grabbed an oar, and helped pull back to the ship.

Safe on deck, where all hands stood in the light of the lantern hung in the rigging, the Geordie shook a fist in the Finn's face, "If ye hadn't uv made me lose me footin' I'd not of gone overboard, blast ye!" he shouted.

The mate blew the lantern out. A voice

from the darkness said, "That fool Finn's always makin' trouble."

"Was it the Finn's fault that fellow went overboard?" the skipper asked me. Two sails had ripped to ribbons and he was mad as the devil about it.

"I guess it was, sir," I answered.

"The fool!" snorted the skipper. "Send him to the masthead! Keep him there till midnight. Maybe it'll teach him a lesson."

THE lightning came back for awhile; a few last flashes. Now and then I had a glimpse of the Finn at the masthead. Once he seemed to be looking down at something in his hand. "What the devil's he got?" I wondered.

Soon after the Plate we came to the Horn. The skipper sent for the Finn again. "You can't go round the Horn without seaboots and oilskins," he told him. But the Finn shook his shaggy head, smiled, and replied, "Dat be a'right, Capting!" He was picking up a little English by now. He faced the Horn barefoot, in nothing but dungarees and ragged red wool underwear. Snow, sleet, hail, spray, and gale after gale. We had two weeks of it before the wind hauled to the northerly, and we could pile sail on and let her drive.

A big round moon shone in a clear sky the night after we left the Horn astern. Tired out by the gales, I sat on the cabin skylight. My head nodded. It was the skipper woke me, storming. "You! What kind of watch d'ye think you're keeping? I've a mind to disrate you!" For a few minutes he strode furiously up and down, while the ship raced on her course. It was likely the speed she was making that cooled his temper, and anyway there was scant danger of running any other ship down on such a bright night. "Go forward and see if the lookoutman's asleep too!" he presently snapped, and went below.

The Finn was on lookout, but a poor lookout he was keeping at the minute I came up the ladder behind where he leaned on the windlass. Before he knew I was there, I was looking over his shoulder at the thing in his hand. A girl's picture, framed in a silver locket. I'd a good look at it ere I spoke. She had a great mass of silky fair hair, a straight firm nose, firm lips, big bold challenging eyes, and an obstinate chin. Her name was written across the bottom of the picture. Marsha. "I bet she's got a temper all her own," I thought.

"You! What kind of lookout d'ye think you're keeping?" I snarled, and snatched

the locket and flung it to the sea. Almost before he knew what had happened, I was striding back to the poop. "We'll be rid of the fellow as soon as we get to Frisco. The boarding masters'll get him," I thought. All up the Pacific I kept him polishing brass and scouring rust spots away.

As soon as the hook was down in Frisco the sailors' boarding masters came off with their booze. Soon all the crew but one were drunk and gone over the side, leaving their wages behind. Only the Finn refused to touch their booze. For the three weeks we lay in Frisco he was the only man aboard. Not once did he set foot ashore. Day after day he worked all alone, chipping rust from her plates.

The night before we sailed a boarding master brought our new crew aboard. A lot of scum, shanghaied from heaven knows where. Waterfront wastrels, not one of them fit to be called sailor. We got the anchor up; thanks in the main to the Finn. When we were outside the heads

it was he who loosed every sail. Luckily the wind was fair, and stayed fair. Little by little, with the mate and me forever after them, but thanks in the main to the example set by the Finn, the crew began to shape up. But when we were over the line and in the southeast trade wind, they were passable sailors. The better they got, the more they began to ride the Finn. He waited on them; just as he'd waited on the old crowd; and always with that queer friendly smile. One dog-watch I even found him greasing the whole crowd's sea boots. "What's the matter with you? Haven't you got any guts at all?" I sneered. All the answer I had was that same smile.

I WAS getting the decks washed down one morning after we'd run out of the trade winds when the Finn came to me with an expression on his face I'd not seen before. A sort of set look; kind of challenging. "What d'ye want?" I asked.

"Der cargo ees on fire, Meester. Poot your hand on der hatch," he quietly replied, so that no one else could hear. I did, and ran for the cabin, and said to the skipper, "The ship's afire below, sir."

"Keep it quiet from the crew," ordered the skipper, and I hurried back to the deck, and closed all the ventilators, and tightened the hatch battens. There was nothing else to do, save run with all possible speed for the Horn and on to the Falklands. But toward the dog-watch a little wisp of smoke came from the after hatch. The crew saw it, and came on a run to the quarterdeck; clamoring that we must take to the boats, and make for the coast. There'd be a good chance of reaching it, with the westerly wind blowing steady, of course. But a man doesn't like to abandon a ship if there's any way out of it. The skipper looked down at the Finn, standing head and shoulders above the others. "You've been with the ship since she first went to sea. Do you want to abandon her?" he asked.

"Vot for leef der sheep so long float der sheep, Capting?" calmly answered the Finn. The others cursed him. "Vot for you scare?" he inquired, with his queer friendly smile. They went forward, half reassured, but not quite knowing what to make of it. For three days the ship ran before an ever freshening wind. On the fourth morning smoke was blowing from every hatch. The decks were hot. The crew came aft again, clamoring to get away in the boats.

"We can't leave her in this sea. The boats would swamp," replied the skipper. An Italian sailor drew his knife and ran at the Finn, cursing him. The Finn caught his wrist, took the knife and tossed it to the sea. "Vot der matter mig you? Der sheep she steel float," he said, smiling his friendly smile at the Italian. Someone laughed, and the men took heart again after a fashion.

By evening it was blowing a gale; the ship rolling hard, the sea seething along her hot sides. All night the crew stood on the poop, shivering with cold and fear. Morning came. The skipper ordered me to take the Finn and hang a bag of seal oil over the bows to break the rage of the seas a little. It was maybe fifteen minutes before we had the oil bag over. As we started back to the poop a flurry of snow fell. At the same moment the main hatch burst wide open from the terrific heat below. A dense column of yellow smoke poured out, hiding the after part of the ship from us. Flame burned the ropes that held down the corners of the crojick and mainsail, so that the two great sails flapped madly. The topsails above them began to scorch, and were quickly ripped by the wind. Marooned on the foredeck, unable to pass the hatch whence smoke and flame poured, we heard shouting on the quarterdeck. Snow came thicker. Presently we had a glimpse of the boat, tossing on the wild sea. I yelled. "Yell! Yell!" I cried to the Finn.

"Better ve safe der breaths, Meester," he calmly answered. I cursed him, my

nerve gone. I broke down, and alternately cursed him and screamed to the boat. "Dat be a'right, Meester," said he, and set a big hand on my shoulder. "Better yow sleeps, Meester," he continued, and drew me into the forecastle. "Yow sleeps. I feex teengs a'right, Meester," said he, and made me get into a bunk. Worn out by sleepless days, and nights without rest, I did fall asleep for a little. When I opened my eyes I was alone; wind roaring, sea roaring, the ship rolling drunkenly. Terrified, I rushed to the deck. The Finn was cutting away the ropes that held a spare mast secure against the bulwarks close by. "What are you doing, you fool!" I yelled. "We've got to get away. She's sinking!"

"Ven seenk der sheep der mast she floats off. Vee get der mast on," he calmly answered. He rose to his feet. "Coom Meester. Ve schvim now. Soon now seenk der sheep," said he, and took my arm and drew me toward the bulwark. "I can't swim," I yelled, and fought to free myself from the great hand. He threw his arms round me, lifted me, and leaped into the sea. What next I remember is that I was clinging to the spare mast, and that he was looking down at me saying, "Better you climbs on der mast, Meester." He helped me up and we sat facing each other. I was chill to my marrow, shuddering with cold and terror. "Better I holds you," he said, and came close and took me in his arms, pressing my body close to his, "Mights be I keep yow leeter varm," he said, with that friendly smile.

What next I remember is opening my eyes, to see him bending above me. I was in a dry bunk, aboard some ship. "After onlee two days coom sheep an' peek us oop," he told me.

She was a Russian bark, bound from Chile for Riga. Her skipper came, and said, "I'll put you aboard one of your own country's ships if we meet one. If we meet none, I'll put you ashore in your own country."

"No! No!" I cried, "I've got to stay with the Finn!" With my nerve all gone, I was like a child in my terror; and couldn't bear the thought of being separated from him.

We shared a tiny room in which were two bunks. As days passed, my nerves got better. The Finn and I went out and worked in the rigging to help pass the time. One day I said to him, "I didn't ought to have thrown your girl's picture into the sea that night. I'm sorry."

"Dot vos onlee pictoor. Dot a'right, Meester," he replied, with his same old smile.

WHEN we came up channel, the Russian skipper asked if I'd like to be put ashore in my own country. Before I could speak, the Finn said, "Yow coom mig me to my Finland! I likes for yow to see my Finland, Meester!" So I said I'd go to Finland with him. It would be easy to get a ship back to my own country. Besides, I didn't yet like the idea of being separated from him; my nerve a bit shaky still.

It was a bright summer morning when the Russian skipper stopped his ship and I followed the Finn aboard a little steamer bound for Helsingfors. We landed in early forenoon, and he at once set out afoot for his home. Soon we were on a country road. "You walk too fast! I can't keep up!" I called. He walked more slowly then, and it was then he told me of how he'd come to go to sea. The sun had set when we came to a farm where an old man was driving cows to a barn. He shouted something in his own lingo to the old man, who turned and at once ran toward us. A white-haired woman looked from the door of a little white house, and next minute was running toward us too. The Finn took her in his arms, held her close, and stroking her white hair kissed her many times. The old people grasped my hand, and the Finn cried happily, "Our home ees your home, Meester!" They took me in to the house, sat me down at table

and heaped the table with food. The old people had eaten already. The Finn said, "Eat, Meester! All der day I valk so fast ain't yow eat nuddings! Now yow eats! Me I go help mig der cows!" He took food from the table, and, accompanied by the old people, went out munching.

I was just done eating when a door opened, and a girl came into the room. She had a great mass of fair silky hair, a straight firm nose, firm lips, an obstinate chin, and big bold challenging eyes that looked full into mine. My nerves were a great deal better now. I was my old self again.

For a long minute we looked into one another's faces. Then I said, "You're very beautiful, Marsha!" She blushed the merest little bit, and then she smiled, and I rose, and reached for and took her hand in mine. "I never saw a girl as beautiful as you are, Marsha," I said.

"You're very kind," she replied, in English. Her big bold eyes said, "You're very handsome."

The outer door opened. The old woman entered first, then the old man, then their son. He strode past them, held out his hands, and cried, "Marsha! Marsha!"

Ignoring his hands, she said very quietly, "You said you'd be gone but a little while. It's been over a year. Did you make the fortune you were going to? And have you got my picture?"

"It voss accident I be so long gone, Marsha! I haff not make der moneys!" he replied, his hands outstretched for her.

"And what about my picture?" she quietly asked.

"Marsha!—Marsha!" he stammered, "I loose your pictoor! It voss accident I loose your pictoor, Marsha!"

SHE gazed at him, her big eyes cold. Suddenly he turned, as though remembering a thing hitherto forgot, and asked the old man, "Where ees my brudder?"

"He went away—to America. A long time ago," replied the old man. Then he touched his son's arm and said something I didn't hear.

With shining eyes, the Finn cried to me, "My fader say now all der farm be for me and my Marsha!" He stepped closer to her, eyes shining, hands outstretched.

"You were gone more than a year—and you have lost my picture," she said, looking full in his face.

TURNING to me with his old friendly smile, the Finn said, "She yoost leetle oopset. She not teenk for me to coom sooden like dees." And then he laughed, and added, "Dere ees vun more cow. I go milk she now," and away he went. The old people bade me good night and went up the steep wooden stairs; the woman telling Marsha to show me my room when I was ready to go to it.

"You don't look like a Finnish girl, Marsha," said I, when we were alone.

"I'm Russian. I was born in Riga," she replied. "My parents died when I was little and my uncle brought me to live with him in Helsingfors. He's dead now, too. I drove here yesterday. The horse and cart are in the barn. I'm all alone now."

"There's the old people's son, and his farm, Marsha," said I, my eyes on hers.

"He lost my picture!" she retorted. "I'll never forgive that. I had it made especially for him and he vowed he'd always keep it close to his heart. I don't want him or his farm!"

The Finn came back. "I am veree tire," he said. "Too excite I have been to sleep for many nights, teenkin' of yow, my Marsha. All day I haff valk. Now I goes der bed to. Tomorrow ve talk, yow an' me. Yow feel better tomorrow. Goot-night, my Marsha!"

"Good-by," said Marsha coldly.

I was alone with her. All through the short northern night we talked; till came the clear northern dawn and birds began to stir and to sing. We stood together, in the open doorway, my arm round her. I hadn't kissed her yet; hadn't dared, lest,

going too fast I'd maybe scare her away. But now, I would!

At a sound behind us we turned. At the foot of the stairs stood the Finn.

"Take me back to Helsingfors. We'd better go now," said Marsha, looking up into my face.

"Vimmens ees foonie, ain't eet? Vot matter dot pictoor? Yoost for by accident I lose dot pictoor, Marsha she mad mig me," said the Finn, looking full in my face with that same old friendly smile.

Something broke in me then. I'd a swift vision of him, swimming after the drowning Geordie; saw him patiently waiting on all hands; refusing clothes, to save a few pennies; felt his great side pressed close to my shivering body, trying to keep life in me while we tossed on the floating mast after the ship sank.

"Here! Here's your girl— Take her!" I cried, and took my arm from her.

She looked up at me, her eyes flashing, started to speak. But I spoke ere she could.

"He didn't lose your picture. He was always fooling away time looking at it. I took it from him and threw it into the sea," said I.

"You threw my picture into the sea!" she gasped.

"Yes," said I, "I didn't think it very pretty, or maybe I'd have kept it," and I smiled down into her angry face.

"You beast!" she cried. "Oh, you beast!"

"Sure, I'm a beast," I laughed. "Go take your man. He's a lot better man than ever I'll be!"

She drew back, furious, as the Finn reached out his great hands for her; but he grasped her, laid a hand on her silky yellow head, and held it against his broad breast.

"Dot vere yow belongs," said he. "Don't yow cry now, mine Marsha! Der secon' mate ees goot faller. Ain't yow go for to call heem bad teengs! Yoost ees he fooriner. Dem fooriners, dey ain't oonderstand vee Finn fallers."

VENGEANCE
HEARTACHE
TRAGEDY . . .

Land lust, more powerful even than the greed for gold, had gripped Kansas. Like locusts, land sharks swarmed over the country — seizing, by one-tenth legal means, ten times their lawful share.

●

A young man and a seller of quack remedies had a long, hard fight to wrest the land from the sharks' teeth. But they did it — and the men who built America came into their inheritance.

IN A BOTTLE OF QUACK MEDICINE

●

George Armin Shaftel
Presents
SQUATTER'S COURT

. . . novelette of stirring Kansas land-rush times.

In Your Feb. 10th Issue of SHORT STORIES — Out Jan. 25th

MURDER AT BANFF

By

ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

Author of "The Cross of Palms," "Ward of the North," etc.

THE masked man said, quietly, "Don't make any fuss. Just raise your hands."

Lester Hatch, manager of the Grand Glacier Hotel at Banff, lost no time in complying. No use to argue with a Colt's .45. However, Hatch did essay a sallow grin. He tried to assure himself that this was a prank of some kind. For the masked intruder wore a dinner suit and a tissue paper frolic cap, and so could hardly be other than one of the guests here. It was the height of the Banff season. At this very minute, which was eleven-thirty P.M., a mask ball was in full swing. The strains of its orchestra came faintly to Hatch from the ballroom, beyond the lobby, Hatch himself having retired here to the hotel office to check over accounts.

Absorbed in these accounts, Hatch hadn't seen the man enter.

"Open the safe," the masked man commanded.

Standing erect directly across the table from Hatch, he pushed the gun forward to within inches of the manager's chin.

The studs in the man's white dinner

If the First Murder Took Place at 11:40 How Tall Was the Murderer?

shirt, Hatch noted, were black onyx. The man was tall and slender. His mask and paper cap were uniform with similar ones which had been furnished by the hotel to guests for the frolic this evening. And no, it wasn't a prank. The boldness of it staggered Hatch. Then he heard the gun hammer click to cock as the man said, "If the safe isn't open in forty seconds, I'll shoot."

Hatch realized he meant it.

So he crossed from his work table to the safe and kneeled there. The masked man followed him. All the while that Hatch twirled the combination, he could feel the gun pressing between his shoulder blades. Then the safe door came open.

"Sorry," the intruder murmured. The gun barrel crashed down and Hatch sagged to the floor, stunned.

WHEN he returned to consciousness, the wall clock said 11:40. The safe was still open and had been looted. Hatch got up and staggered to a telephone on the table.

"Give me the barracks," he demanded. "Quick."

The Mounted Police barracks answered promptly. And Hatch reported, "This is Hatch at the Grand Glacier. Masked man just held me up and cleaned out the safe. Right, Inspector. One of the guests here,

I'm sure. He wore a paper cap and dinner suit. Right, hurry, please."

The manager's head was splitting from an ugly gash there. His hand slapped to it and came away stained. The nerve of that bounder! Had he taken to the woods? Or had he merely concealed the loot somewhere inside and then rejoined his fellow-revelers at the dance?

There'd been a briefcase on the table. It was gone now. Presumably the man had used it as a container for the loot.

It was now 11:42. Hatch hurried out into the lobby. He found it deserted except for a bellboy lounging on his bench, an elevator man standing at the open door of his lift, and Artie Welch, a night clerk on duty back of the registry desk.

Artie Welch's eyes popped as Hatch rushed up to him. "What's wrong, Mr. Hatch? Is that—gee, it's blood!" The night clerk, a slight, short man with a billiard ball's baldness, continued to gape in confusion as Hatch barked questions.

"The devil's up, Artie! We've been robbed. Did anyone skip out of here just now?"

"Not a soul, Mr. Hatch. Robbed? Gee, I don't see how anyone could—"

"He could and he did," Hatch snapped. "And we've got to grab him. Did you hear a car drive away?"

"I haven't heard a thing, Mr. Hatch, except that party going on in the ballroom."

Hatch summoned the bellboy to ask the same questions.

"Six-forty-four rang for cracked ice about fifteen minutes ago," the bellboy said. "I went up in the lift with it and just got back."

Three R.C.M.P. men with Sam Brownes aslant across scarlet tunics, came in at the main entrance and crossed briskly to the desk. Hatch took another swipe at the gash on his skull, then turned to repeat jerkily everything he knew. "I'll wager the rascal's stepping high on the dance floor right this minute, Inspector."

INSPECTOR DALE BLANDING, young for his rank, younger in fact than either of the two trail-toughened constables who flanked him, turned to fix keen blue eyes upon night clerk Artie Welch. "See anyone cross the lobby, Welch?"

"No, sir. Everyone seems to be in the ballroom, sir, except guests who've already retired."

"Could anyone get from the ballroom to the manager's office without crossing the lobby?"

"Simple," Hatch broke in bitterly. "There's a lateral corridor just back of the lobby. It goes from the east wing, where the ballroom is, to my office in the west wing."

"You say this chap was slim and tall? How tall?"

"A full head taller than Artie here. About your height, I should say, Inspector."

Inspector Blanding was six feet.

"How much did he get away with?"

The manager shrugged. "Can't say. The hotel itself only had about three thousand in the safe. But there were at least fifty envelopes of valuables, left with us by guests for safekeeping."

"Quite." Blanding was aware that well-to-do patrons at a resort like the Grand Glacier, devoting much of their time to bathing or hiking, wouldn't want to be encumbered with their billfolds. So they would store these and other valuables in the hotel safe.

A third constable now entered the lobby. Saluting Blanding he reported, "I've questioned the line of taxis in front, sir. They say no one went out in that ten minutes. No car drove away. We've circled the grounds and can't spot sign of an outside prowler. Looks like inside work, sir."

"Of course it is," Hatch insisted. "Both the thief and the money are still under this roof."

Blanding was inclined to agree. As a routine precaution, however, he sent a constable to the barracks with instructions

for an alarm to be telegraphed abroad in the province, and for all highways to be watched.

A second constable was instructed to see that no person or vehicle left the grounds without being searched. The third constable was detailed to patrol the ballroom and make a list of all tall, slender men who wore black, onyx studs in their dinner shirts.

"They'll be unmasking at midnight," Hatch said. It was now 11:53.

He led Blanding to his office where a looted safe still stood open. The inspector's eyes took in all details of the room. The furnishings were severe and simple, consisting of a long, center table where Hatch had been seated at work, the safe, a filing cabinet, a dictionary stand, a typist's desk and three chairs. The floor was linoleum.

Blanding saw a number of bloodspots on the linoleum directly in front of the safe. "I lay bleeding there for nine minutes, and out cold," Hatch said.

"Which gives us a lead. Look." Blanding pointed to the bloodspots, one of which had been smeared to the shape of a V.

"Maybe I stepped on it," Hatch said. But there was no stain either on his clothing or shoes.

"More likely the hold-up man stepped on it," Blanding thought, "after rolling you out of the way."

"In that case we want a tall slim man with black onyx shirt studs and a V-shaped bloodstain on the sole of his shoe."

"Right. And now for a general check-up, Hatch. Better arouse your day force and set them to work. My men will help them. First, they'll see if any car's missing from the hotel garage. Next they'll see if any guest's disappeared. And look for a gun. If anyone's hiding a gun, let me know."

"We've about a hundred guests," Hatch growled. "Some thirty of 'em came by automobile. Others came by bus or train. The cars are all parked directly below this floor, in a basement garage."

"Get the check-up under way—and better have that cut on your scalp patched. Then rejoin me here, Hatch."

The manager went out and one of the Mountie constables, returning from a patrol about the ballroom, came in.

"More than a dozen tall slim chaps in there, Inspector," he reported. "But only four of 'em wear black onyx studs."

"You took the names of those four?"

"Aye, sir. I had the bellboy in tow and he tipped me to the names. Here they are."

The names were scribbled on the back of a menu. "I stopped by the desk and got where they're registered from, Inspector. Three are Canadians and one's a Yankee."

Blanding read:

	Room	*Arrived by*
John F. Gregg, Toronto	247	train
Alvin Iverson, Winnipeg	311	train
Walter C. Beck, Vancouver	550	bus
Frank Lucas, New York	616	auto

"The party's unmasked now," the constable said. "I think they've got the wind up, sir, on account of my prowl in there."

"Tell the bellboy to ask those four men to step in," Blanding directed. "While I question 'em here, you go up and search their rooms. Get a pass key from the night clerk."

"Yes, sir. And Sergeant-major Mason's in the lobby. He just got here from bar-

racks with Corporal Twyman and Constable Croy."

"Good. Tell Mason and Twyman to go to the basement and search Frank Lucas's car. They can look over all the other cars too. Our man might have slipped down to hide the loot in a car and then gone on to the ballroom. You yourself, Perry, better take Croy up to help you search the four rooms. Then join the hotel force in a general search of all unoccupied rooms, corridors, linen closets and all out-of-way corners."

"Right, sir." Perry saluted and went out.

Dale Blanding lighted a cigarette and sat down, concentrating. A dinner-suited thief in mask and paper cap! The man might be an outsider who had taken to the woods.

But the insider theory struck Blanding as more probable. If it were a guest or an employee, and no one was missing, then the loot must still be on the premises. The man had evidently planned everything carefully in advance. Blanding tried to put himself in the man's place. He imagined himself dodging out of the ballroom at 11:29, with the dance in full swing. A few seconds to reach this office by the lateral corridor, not visible from the lobby. Three minutes for the hold-up. That would still leave seven minutes before 11:40, when Hatch had returned to consciousness.

In seven minutes the man might dash to an upper room by stairway, conceal the loot and return to the ballroom. In the same time he could hide it in a car below stairs. If smart, he would hardly take flight with it. To be missed would mean to be accused.

"Well, what's the beef, Inspector?" A tall, slender man had entered to confront Blanding.

Blanding fixed his eyes on the man's onyx shirt studs. "You're Frank Lucas?" he inquired.

"Sure I am. So what?" The man spoke truculently. By his accent, Blanding had concluded instantly that he was an American.

"Cheerio. What's up?" A second tall, slim man came in. This one was a blondish, gay fellow with tousled hair and a few too many cocktails under his belt. "Gregg's the name. Johnnie Gregg."

Tall slim men, numbers three and four, Iverson and Beck, followed at his heels. Beck, a red-cheeked youngster with pompadour hair and glasses, might be a vacationing student. "What's the rib?" he asked. "I'll bite."

Iverson, with a dark narrow face and older than the others, compressed thin, severe lips as he stared first at Blanding's uniform and then at an open safe.

Each of the four men wore black, onyx studs.

Blanding explained courteously about the hold-up. "The thief was of your dress and build, gentlemen. I think he stepped on a bloodspot. Hope you won't take offense if I look at your boot soles."

The three Canadians promptly displayed their shoe soles, which were stainless. Gregg laughed raucously. "My boots are like my conscience, pure as a lily, Inspector."

Frank Lucas, the American, needed coaxing.

"It's just a formality," Blanding murmured.

"Aw right," Lucas growled. "But I don't see why I should stand for it." He sat down, glowering, and held up his feet for inspection.

"What, no blood?" Gregg jibed. "You look disappointed, Inspector."

"It seems to clear all of you," Blanding smiled. "But while you're here, please answer the same question we must ask everyone in the hotel."

"Shoot," snapped Lucas.

"Where were you from 11:30 to 11:40?"

"I was dancing. Can't say who the girl was, because she was masked. And so was I."

The same response came from Beck and Gregg.

"I don't dance myself," Iverson said stiffly. "But I sat on a lounge in there all evening, to watch and hear the music. Is that any crime? If this quizz is over, I'll run along to bed now."

Blanding became aware that Manager Hatch, his head bandaged, had entered the office and was regarding all four suspects sharply.

"That is all, gentlemen, and thank you," Blanding said.

When the four guests had withdrawn he turned to the manager. "Was it one of those four, Hatch?"

"Can't be sure," Hatch muttered. "The hold-up man spoke in a low monotone. The mask covered his face and the cap covered his hair. These chaps are tall enough—that's all I can say."

"How long were you working here, Hatch, before the man came in?"

"I came in at eleven. I usually work here an hour, from eleven to midnight, checking the day's income and outgo. And say, here's an odd slant, Inspector. When I came in here at eleven tonight, I had a vague feeling that something wasn't just right. Couldn't put my finger on it. Then I got absorbed in the accounts and forgot all about it."

"Perhaps," Blanding suggested, "you subconsciously sensed someone hiding in the office. Maybe the man had entered before eleven, and was hiding under this table, or crouching back of that dictionary stand over there."

"Then why would he wait half an hour before holding me up?"

"Possibly he waited for the lobby to get quiet. For the last of the guests to go to bed or to the dance room."

Just now the shrill voice of a woman came to them from the lobby. They could hear her demanding of night clerk Artie Welch if it were true her valuables had been stolen from the safe.

"The devil!" Hatch fumed. "Those four suspects have spread the story, evidently. Means I'll have fifty guests storming me in no time."

BLANDING looked at the wall clock, which now said 12:24. The affair in the ballroom would soon break up and guests would retire for the night. That would mean no opportunity for general questioning until morning.

"To save time, Hatch, I wish you'd go in there and announce frankly just what happened. Tell it from the orchestra platform, and your bandaged head'll make it convincing. Then say that if anyone noticed anything strange between 11:30 and 11:40, he or she should report it to me here."

Hatch recoiled from the idea. "We'll have a blasted panic on our hands," he protested.

"They'll find it out anyway," Blanding argued. And the manager went reluctantly on the errand.

Constable Perry came in to report. "Croy and I searched those four rooms, sir. No loot. No gun. While we were at it, though, we picked up a good fingerprint of each man."

"Have the fingerprints photographed, Perry. Send three of 'em to Ottawa. And send Lucas' to the F.B.I. at Washington, D.C. Ask if any of those four prints have a record."

"Aye, sir."

As Perry went out, Sergeant-major Mason came in. "Twyman and I searched the Lucas car, sir, and found nothing. Twyman's still down there, searching all the other cars in the garage."

"Has anyone skipped out?"

"No, sir. All guests and employees have been accounted for."

Take charge of the general search, Mason."

The sergeant-major withdrew and in a moment Hatch came back from the ballroom. "I made that announcement, Inspector, and they're all in a dither."

"By the way, Hatch, just what do you know about our four onyx-studded suspects?"

"About three of 'em, I know only what's written on the register. Their names and addresses. But about the Beck kid, I know he's in arrears with his account here. It's likely I'll have to hold his baggage."

"Broke, eh?"

"Stony. The clerks say he gets a batch of duns in every post."

"Find out what you can about the others. Those spotless bootsoles aren't conclusive, you know."

A knock on the door made Hatch say, "Come in."

A GIRL in evening dress entered. She was about twenty-five and her golden hair was fashionably trimmed. "Ah! Good evening, Miss Logan. Hope we haven't upset you." Hatch greeted her with the deference he used toward his more important guests.

"This is Miss Anne Logan, of Detroit, Inspector."

That much, and a good deal more, Inspector Blanding had known for three years.

For three straight summers this young lady had come here to the Grand Glacier at Banff, and Blanding had been only too well aware of it. Many times he'd seen her sketching landscapes in the woods about here. And each time he'd been vividly impressed. For three years he'd wanted to meet her. But what chance would an inspector of mounted police have with the only daughter and heiress of Lawrence S. Logan, of the mighty Logan Motor Car Corporation? So being a man of pride and reserve, Dale Blanding had only worshipped from afar.

"I'm awfully glad to know you, Inspector." Her smile charmed him. He forgot, for a moment, what he was here for. Then she said, "Mr. Hatch asked us to report anything strange about eleven-thirty."

"Quite," Blanding murmured. "And you noticed something strange around that time?"

"Only that my dance partner disappeared," she said.

"He was masked, I suppose, so you can't say who he was?"

"He was Gerald Frost," she said. "And of course Gerry's entirely above suspicion. I've known him a long time, you see."

"But if he was masked—"

"Oh, the mask didn't quite cover his mustache. Besides, he asked me to send his regards to Dad in Detroit. Then he left me on the dance floor and walked out at exactly half past eleven."

"How can you be sure of the time?"

"Because Gerry, as we danced, saw my wrist-watch. He said: 'Darn it, I promised to put in a long distance call at eleven. I'm half an hour late. It may cause me to lose a sale at Moose Jaw'. Gerry's an airplane salesman, you see, and a customer at Moose Jaw had promised to give him a yes or no at eleven."

"So he left you and went to telephone?"

"Yes. He said he'd be right back. But he didn't come. It isn't like Gerry to leave a girl on the dance floor and not come back to her."

It wouldn't be, Blanding agreed silently, if the girl were Anne Logan.

Aloud he said to Hatch, "Does Gerald Frost have a car here?"

"He has. Keeps it in the basement garage, of course."

"Mind seeing if it's still there?"

The manager nodded and went out.

Blanding said, "Miss Logan, I'd like you to show me exactly where you last saw Frost."

"Of course." The girl went with Blanding out into the lobby. A score of chattering guests were there, having rushed from the ballroom to inquire about valuables consigned to the safe. Most of them were besieging the night clerk, Artie Welch.

Blanding stopped at the desk and said:

"Please ring Mr. Gerald Frost's room and see if he's there."

There was no response to the call.

"You haven't seen him in the lobby?"

"Not since about ten o'clock," Artie Welch said.

The inspector moved on with Anne Logan to the east wing. Half the guests were still there when they entered the ballroom. All masks were off now. Guests stood in groups to stare curiously as the heiress to Logan Motors entered with a handsome, red-coated inspector of mounted police.

"We were dancing about here," Anne said, "when Gerry dashed away to telephone."

"By which exit?"

"That one." She indicated a door which gave not into the lobby but into a secondary corridor.

They went to it, Blanding having already concluded that Hatch's assailant could not logically be Frost. No crime-planner would so pointedly call attention to his withdrawal from the ballroom at the hour of crime.

The corridor, Blanding now observed, extended laterally across the building to the west wing. A door giving into Hatch's office was at the far end of it. So this would make a convenient route for anyone wishing to pass from ballroom to manager's office without being seen by the night clerk in the lobby.

Also, Banding could see a public phone booth near the far end of the corridor.

"I don't suppose you need me any more?" Anne smiled.

"No. And thank you," he said, and she turned back to join a group in the ballroom.

Blanding walked westerly along the corridor. Midway of its length, Manager Hatch appeared suddenly from steps which ascended from the basement garage. "Frost's coupe is in its stall," he reported. "Your man Twyman took a look through it and he gives it a clear bill."

The two moved on a few paces to the phone booth. Blanding opened the booth and then stepped gingerly backward. Hatch choked a cry. For as Blanding opened the door, the body of a dinner-suited man toppled grotesquely into the corridor.

"Damnation!" Hatch gasped.

The man's head had been crushed by a blow. Blanding, recovering from his shock, stooped for a moment over the victim. "He's dead, Hatch. Bludgeoned in cold blood! Is it—"

"Yes, it's Frost," the manager said hoarsely.

"Get Sergeant-major Mason here right away."

The manager, his face faded to a fish-belly whiteness, went stumbling away to comply.

Blanding entered the booth and raised the receiver. This not being a house phone, response came direct from Central. "Was a call made on this phone just after 11:30?" he asked Central.

After a brief check-up he was informed: "Yes, at exactly 11.33. A Mr. Gerald Frost called Moose Jaw."

"Was the call completed?"

"Yes. At 11:35."

As Blanding emerged from the booth, Hatch rushed up with Sergeant Mason.

"At about 11:35," Blanding explained to them, "the thief finished looting Hatch's safe. He came down this hall with his nerves jumpy, probably not sure whether he'd left Hatch alive or dead. So when he passed this booth and Frost stepped out on him, he cracked down. Or maybe Frost

actually saw the office door open as the thief came out, and saw Hatch on the floor in there."

Mason agreed vigorously. "That's it, sir. This poor chap walked right into a crime and got done in for it, sir."

"We've got to get him out of sight," Hatch worried, "before guests begin crowding in here."

"Call help and take him to his room, Mason."

Blanding himself hurried below to the garage. There he found the night garage attendant helping Twyman look through some thirty cars.

"We've poked through all baggage compartments and even under the seats, sir. And we can't find that money or a gun."

"Keep looking, Twyman."

Blanding turned to the attendant, "Where were you at 11:30?"

"I was at that little desk by the drive-out door, sir. Waiting for a ring, in case any guest wanted his car taken out front. But I didn't have any calls since 11:30."

"Did anyone come prowling down here?"

"I didn't see anyone. And I'm sure no car's been driven out."

The attendant himself, being short and chunky, could hardly have been the assailant described by Hatch.

What about the bellboy who claimed to have taken cracked ice to Room 644 during the critical ten minutes? Remembering that the bellboy was slim and tallish, Blanding went up to the lobby and interviewed the lift operator.

"I took Eddie up," the lift man said, "and I waited on the sixth floor till he was ready to come down."

The inspector crossed to the registry desk. There he asked, "Who plugs in the phone calls to and from rooms?"

"An exchange girl's on duty until eleven at night," Artie Welch said. "After eleven we don't have many calls. So I handle the plug board myself."

"Make a note of any room calls to or from these four men." Blanding gave him the names of Beck, Lucas, Gregg and Iverson. "Also please hold all outgoing mail for inspection. It might be that the guilty man has a confederate on the outside."

Blanding then went into Hatch's office to spend the remainder of the night directing his subordinates. From hour to hour he received reports there, while the hotel was combed from roof to cellar without result.

By gray dawn Sergeant Major Mason was willing to stake his stripes that both the criminal and the money were far away.

The search went on just the same, for another day, through another night and on through another day.

LATE in the afternoon of the second day, Anne Logan drove her long-hooded Logan roadster out of the hotel garage. She wore a smock over her sports dress, taking with her an easel, a stool and complete equipment for transferring a sunset to canvas.

As she passed out through the main gate Inspector Blanding was there questioning a gardener. Anne stopped her car for a moment. "Have you found out anything, Inspector?"

Blanding made a self-accusing grimace. "It's a blind haul so far, Miss Logan."

"Is there anything I can do to help? You see, Gerry Frost was an old and close friend."

"I'm afraid there's nothing you can do."

"Mr. Hatch says the man's tall and slim —and perhaps has a V-shaped stain on his shoe sole."

"Whoever he is, you'd better keep out of his way," Blanding advised. "After a man's killed once, he doesn't mind doing it again."

Anne drove up a road which, after twisting through high spruce timber, brought her to the shore of a lake. A certain perspective there, where green hills were mirrored in deep blue water, had engaged her artistry for the past week. Twice before

she'd gone there to make sunset sketches.

But they hadn't suited her. This evening she hoped to do better.

She reached the lakeshore just as the sun was setting in a red ball on the far hills.

Anne parked her car at the rim of the timber and carried her painting paraphernalia about thirty steps on toward the shore.

She set up her easel. In a very few minutes she was at work, completely engrossed.

THE soft shadows, and the brilliant colors of the sky, enchanted her. She must catch them before they were gone.

When light began to fade, Anne sighed regretfully. She surveyed her work and it still displeased her. Tomorrow she would come here to try again.

The quiet twilight made it hard for her to leave. It was so peaceful after all those sordid affairs at the hotel. A loon cried far out on the lake. And to the left, up the shore, Anne saw lamplight come on at a woodsman's cottage.

Then she gathered her things and went back toward the car.

Nearing it, she stopped breathless and startled.

The legs of a man reached out from under the roadster. The man lay on his back, quite still; for an instant she thought she might have run over him.

Then she knew it couldn't be that. This was some stealthy intruder who had wriggled under the car, face up, and who now lay there in the pose of a mechanic at work on the underframing. She could only see his legs from hips to boots.

"What," Anne demanded sharply, "are you doing under there?"

She wasn't afraid.

Or rather she had no sense of danger until the man began sliding out, feet first. When he had wriggled a few inches out he exposed his slim waistline—and two hands.

One of the hands held a briefcase. The other a gun.

The gun frightened Anne. Immediately she realized that he'd shoot her if he ever got out from under the car, and on his feet, to find her confronting him here.

So Anne turned and ran. She raced swiftly toward the lamplight in a woodsman's cottage.

At each step she half expected to hear a gun booming behind her. No shots came, however.

Anne burst into the cottage and found only the woodsman's wife there. "Have you a telephone?" she gasped.

Because the woodsman was also a forest fire guard, there was a telephone. Anne lost no time calling Inspector Blanding at the barracks. "Hurry," she begged. "I've found both the murderer and the missing money."

DALE BLANDING roared up on a motorcycle fifteen minutes later. Anne took him to her roadster on the lakeshore. The car had not been disturbed. Imprints in the sand evidenced that a man had wriggled on his back under it, and out again. "You don't need to tell me he was a thin man," Blanding muttered. "A chunky chap could hardly get under one of these modern cars."

"I didn't see his face," Anne said. "But he must be the same—"

"Of course he's the same man," Blanding cut in. "And this proves it."

He picked up a briefcase, which was now empty. Then he began gathering a litter of torn brown envelopes, all of which were likewise empty. Each envelope was standard stationery of the Grand Glacier Hotel. And written in ink on each envelope was the name of a guest who had sealed valuables in it, for safekeeping.

"Because the briefcase and the envelopes definitely identified his loot, the man got rid of them," the inspector concluded. "He didn't have time night before last. Just when was he here, Miss Logan?"

"I think it was about six o'clock."

Blanding glanced at his watch. "It's now

six-thirty, which gives him a half hour start. Here come my trackers now."

A clatter of hooves and then six horsemen drew up. Five were troopers of the mounted police and one was an Indian tracker.

Blanding indicated retreating tracks in the sand. "Pick him up," he snapped.

The Indian took the lead, followed by the troopers.

Blanding remained with Anne. "That murdering rascal can't be sure if you saw his face or not," he warned. "Means you're in danger. So I'll see you back to the hotel."

"It's hardly necessary," Anne protested. "Driving, I can be there in ten minutes."

"And so can I." Blanding began stowing the looted envelopes into the briefcase. "It's where I ought to be—because I've no doubt our man's back there already."

"At the hotel?"

The inspector nodded grimly. "An outsider could hardly have known you'd been in the habit of coming here at sunset to paint this lake. Nor would an outsider have hidden the briefcase by wedging it between the exhaust pipe and the underframing of your roadster. Smart trick, that. He didn't dare carry it out of the hotel himself, so he let your car do it for him. Then he was on the spot to retrieve it the first time you went out sketching. And look, here's something else."

Blanding exposed a flat side of the briefcase and Anne saw a dark, V-shaped stain there.

"We thought he stepped on it," Blanding said. "Instead, he merely laid the briefcase on the floor beside him while he rifled the safe. The briefcase smeared the V-shaped bloodspot—which was another reason for the man to get rid of it."

Anne was putting her painting things back into the car.

"I wish I could help you catch him," she said; her face was flaming not only from excitement, but from indignation at being used as a pawn.

"So we're right back where we started," Blanding muttered. "I mean our failure to find a stain on a shoe sole doesn't signify a thing. It can still be anyone of our four tall, slim chaps who wore black onyx studs."

He named them to her. "Be careful not to be caught out alone by any one of them, Miss Logan."

Anne drove back to the hotel with Blanding alongside on his motorcycle. It was 6:55 when they turned in at the gate. A Mountie constable was posted there and Blanding said to him, "Go along to the garage with Miss Logan, Croy. And don't let her out of your sight until she's in her room."

Anne drove on to the basement garage, followed by Croy.

Blanding asked the gateman about arrivals in the last forty minutes. Various guests had gone in or out, but the gateman hadn't seen Gregg, Lucas, Beck or Iverson.

When Blanding went in to the registry desk, he found the day clerk still on duty. "Ring these four men and tell 'em I'd like to see 'em." The inspector wrote four names on a pad.

He then commandeered bellboys and told them to page his four suspects in all quarters. "And find out if anyone of 'em was seen coming in at some rear or side entrance, this past hour."

The boys scurried away. Hatch came up, his eyes blinking at the briefcase held by Blanding. "It's empty," the inspector said, and explained quickly.

They went into Hatch's office and almost immediately Alvin Iverson of Winnipeg reported to them there. The man's dark narrow face wore a sulk. "See here," he protested, "I'm a bit fed up at being paged on this business."

"Where were you at six o'clock?" Blanding demanded.

"I was where I usually am at that hour. In the cocktail lounge."

"Check on that, Hatch. And will you please stand by in the lobby, Iverson?"

The manager went out with Iverson.

A bellboy then brought in the tall, blondish John Gregg. "I found him in the billiard room, sir."

"Where were you at six, Gregg?"

"Taking a bath. Then I came down to the billiard room looking for a game."

"And found one with whom?"

"Nobody was there. So I just knocked the balls around by myself."

Nor did Blanding have any better luck with Walter Beck of Vancouver. The red-cheeked young man seemed more curious than alarmed. "The clerk gave me a ring," he said. "What's up?"

"He rang your room? How long have you been there, Beck?"

"Since about five-thirty. Why? I went up to dress for dinner." Beck was in dinner clothes now.

The day clerk came in to say, "Mr. Lucas' room doesn't answer, sir. I think he's up there, though."

"Why?"

"Because he stopped at the desk at six o'clock, and asked for his key. I saw him go up in the lift."

The clerk went back to his duties and Hatch came in with Constable Twyman. "The bartender vaguely remembers serving Iverson this evening," Hatch said. "But he's served a hundred people since five o'clock and he can't be sure just when Iverson was in."

Blanding dismissed Beck and Gregg, asking them to stand by in the lobby. He then went with Hatch and Twyman to the lift and they went up to Frank Lucas' room, which was Number 616. "The desk clerk gives Lucas a six o'clock alibi," Blanding admitted. "Still, I want to be sure."

They knocked and there was no response. The door was locked.

But Hatch had a pass key and with this they entered.

"Damn!" he exploded. All three of them stood petrified by evidence on the bed.

Lucas lay there, strangled and dead. A bathrobe cord had been twisted about his neck and pulled taut.

The body still had the warmth of life. It was clad only in trousers and undershirt. Blanding went into the bathroom where damp towels indicated that Lucas might have taken a bath at six o'clock and then lain down for a nap before dinner.

Blanding said bitterly, "It looks, Hatch, like he was strangled in his sleep within the last thirty minutes. Twyman, you'd better telephone for Sergeant Mason and the medical examiner."

"If there was a rumpus in here, sir, maybe the next rooms heard it."

Blanding went out into the hall and knocked at the next room on the left, Number 618. There was no answer. He then tried Room 614, to the right of Lucas', and was admitted by an elderly lady.

"Did you hear a disturbance in the next room," he inquired, "within the last hour?"

"No," she said. "But I *did* hear a quarrel in there one day last week."

"You did? A quarrel between Mr. Lucas and whom?"

"I can't say, really. The voices were low, at first. Then one voice rose to a high pitch. It seemed desperate. I caught the words, 'But I haven't got that much!' And the other voice retorted, 'Then get it.' That was all I heard."

"Thank you." Blanding turned away and stepped across the hall to Room 615, which directly faced Lucas'. He found a young honeymooning couple there. They had heard nothing, they said.

"But I *saw* something," the young man said. "It was about half an hour ago, I think."

"What did you see?"

"I'd gone to the lobby for a magazine and was coming back to the room here. Just as I reached my door, I saw the doorknob across the hall, in the door of 616, turn. It wiggled for a moment, but the door didn't open. It was as if someone on the inside was trying the door, to see if it

were locked. But that seems odd, doesn't it?"

"It does," Blanding admitted. "Because anyone can unlock a hotel room door from the inside."

He went back to rejoin Hatch and Twyman inside Room 616. "Don't touch the inside doorknob, Twyman," he said. "Because the last hand to touch it was the murderer's, when he was leaving."

Then Blanding noticed a towel on the floor by the door. "I've got it, Hatch. Before leaving, the killer used this towel to wipe his fingerprints off the doorknob. Wiping the knob wiggled it and so the man across the hall saw the outside knob twist back and forth. Take good care of that towel, Hatch. I want it checked under a microscope for beach sand, or for oil stains. This same man, I think, only a little while before was flat on the beach sand under Miss Logan's car, with his hands touching oily underframing."

"I'll take care of it, sir," Twyman picked up the towel.

"Both of you stand by here, till Mason comes."

With his pulses jumping, Blanding descended to the lobby. He stopped by the registry desk, where the day clerk was being relieved by Night Clerk Artie Welch.

"If anyone tries to check out tonight, Welch, let me know."

"Mr. Iverson just sent up for his bags," Welch whispered. "He's catching the nine o'clock train."

Blanding turned and saw Iverson pacing the lobby. Not far away from him, on a lounge, were Beck and Gregg.

Blanding went promptly to Iverson. "I'd rather you wouldn't leave till we get this cleared up," he said.

"You mean you're arresting me?" Iverson challenged.

"I hope I shan't have to."

"I won't stay here to be badgered."

Blanding's eyes searched him. After all, he had nothing on this man except that he was tall and slender, and had worn onyx studs. "I'll promise not to badger you, Iverson. But come, put yourself in my place. Two murders!"

"Two? I only heard about one!"

"Two murders—plus a raid on a girl's car."

"What girl's car?"

Before Blanding could answer, a trooper came in at the main entrance. The trooper was excited. He held a canvas bag which he brought directly to the inspector.

"We didn't catch the blighter, sir. But we *did* catch up with his loot. Here it is—about fourteen thousand dollars and a handful of jewelry."

The entire lobby was staring.

"The trail led where?" Asking the question, Blanding kept one eye on Iverson. His other eye took in Beck and Gregg who were gaping from a nearby lounge.

"It led," the trooper reported, "in a circle through the woods and back to a side door of this hotel. A mean trail to follow. If we hadn't had Indian Tom with us, we'd have lost it. About halfway here it passed that old abandoned sawmill up Crutcher's Gulch. We searched the stack o' sawdust there and found the stuff."

That settled it for Blanding. It proved definitely that the criminal was under this roof.

"I'm not arresting you now," he said to Iverson. "But I will if you try checking out."

He crossed to Beck and Gregg where he made the same blunt statement.

Then Blanding turned to the trooper. "Report to Twyman in Room 616. And tell Manager Hatch I'll be in his office."

News of the murder in Room 616 spread quickly. It created a near panic and Hatch, distressed and haggard, joined Blanding to report that a score of guests were packing to check out. "They'll sue the hotel, hang it, if I try to hold them!"

"Try holding them," Blanding suggested, "by announcing that all envelopes of valuables will be returned to the owners in the morning. Tell 'em the money's been recovered, but the police want to check it over."

"And if they insist on going anyway?"

"We won't forcibly stop anyone but Iverson, Beck and Gregg."

Hatch restored the money to the safe. "Your medical man's up in 616," he reported.

"He says he thinks Lucas was throttled while sleeping. He's certain it happened since six o'clock."

"Devil of a mess!" Blanding muttered. "We've a shark-cold killer right in our midst, watching every move we make."

"And he'll kill again—at the drop of a hat!" Hatch fretted. "If he thinks a single witness can tell tales on him, he'll—"

"Right," the inspector cut in. "So I've got to talk first and fast to every possible witness. I'll use this office to hold court in. Send to me every employee who was on duty at six. Maids, waiters, cooks, bellboys, lift men, bartender, gardeners—everyone. Also every guest who was on the sixth floor at that hour."

"I'll shoot them in here," Hatch promised.

"First, send in our tall slim men. I'll give them one more raking over."

These three came in shortly, Iverson sullen, Gregg flushed with excitement, Beck with a tongue in his cheek. Blanding fired questions at them for ten minutes, without result. In the end he said to them jointly, "Miss Logan saw only the legs of a man under her car. She hasn't the slightest notion who he is."

Beck remarked derisively, "Chummy of you to tell us that, Inspector. I imagine it's so we'll know it's no use to go gunning for her."

"Exactly," Blanding admitted.

As the three withdrew, Iverson flung back from the doorway, "I'm filing suit for this humiliation, Inspector."

Then Trooper Twyman came in with a grim conviction on his face and with vital evidence in his hands. On the table before Blanding he placed a laboratory microscope and a white china saucer.

"We combed the fabric of that towel, sir—I mean the one the man used to wipe six-sixteen's doorknob clean of fingerprints. We didn't find any sand or oil particles, but we did find—well, have a look yourself, sir."

Particles combed from the towel were in the saucer. They were tiny particles, woody and yellow.

Blanding examined them through the glass. "Sawdust!" he agreed.

"It ties everything up, don't you think, sir?"

"In a knot, Twyman. At about 6:15 the man buried his loot in sawdust. At about 6:30 he strangled Lucas in 616, then picked up a damp towel to swab the doorknob. His hand still had a few grains of sawdust on it and they stuck to the towel."

Other witnesses began filing in, then.

For weary hours Blanding interviewed them. Chambermaids, cooks, bellboys, gardeners, sixth floor guests. But not one of them could throw additional light on the crime.

It was just after eleven o'clock that Sergeant Major Mason came bursting in with two telegrams. He gave them to Blanding.

"It's about those fingerprints, sir."

The first telegram was from Ottawa. It informed that the fingerprints of the three Canadian suspects, Beck, Iverson and

Gregg, did not correspond to any prints on file.

The other telegram was from the F.B.I. at Washington, D. C. It said that the fingerprint labeled "Frank Lucas" matched the filed prints of one "Culbert Chapman", and that Chapman had been twice convicted on blackmailing charges. His second term had expired recently.

"Maybe he was still at his old game, sir," Mason suggested.

"I'll warrant he was," Blanding nodded. "And it would explain just about everything except the identity of his murderer."

"He must have had the goods on someone here, sir."

"Looks that way, Mason. Just for a name, let's say that Gregg, for instance, is guilty of something he could be hanged for. Chapman knows all about it. So Chapman registers here as Lucas and calls Gregg to his room to demand say ten thousand dollars. They quarrel. Gregg protests frantically 'I haven't got that much'; and Chapman snaps back, 'Get it'.

"Desperate, and with his neck at stake, Gregg holds up Hatch and robs the safe. He hides the money in the underframing of Miss Logan's car. Two days later he recovers it and hides it in sawdust. He hurries on back to the hotel with the intention of telling Chapman that he's in a position to pay off. But he finds Chapman asleep. This opportunity tempts Gregg, so he strangles Chapman. That way he can keep the money without fear of being blackmailed again."

"You can't be far wrong, Inspector."

Blanding lighted a cigarette and puffed absorbedly. "In just what stall, Mason, does Miss Logan keep her car?"

"It's the first stall at the bottom of the steps, sir."

Blanding nodded. "That would be one reason why the man chose her car for a cache. Also he knew she's above suspicion. Also he knew she drives out to sketch at lonely places."

"But I don't see how he made that prowl night before last," Mason puzzled, "without running into someone."

"He *did* run into someone. He ran into Frost. And the prowl wouldn't take long. Let's walk through the paces of it and see just how long it would take."

Blanding picked up the briefcase and led Mason out into the lateral corridor. They went the length of this to a door giving into the now deserted ballroom.

By Blanding's watch it was exactly 11:30, forty-eight hours after the hold-up.

"Follow me, Mason." Blanding walked briskly back the length of the corridor to Hatch's office. "Now I wait fifteen seconds while I put a gun on Hatch. Next I wait forty-five seconds while Hatch opens the safe. Now I crack down on Hatch and wait two full minutes while I stuff money into a briefcase."

After timing these intervals, Blanding started back along the corridor toward the ballroom. A few steps brought him to a phone booth. "I stop here fifteen seconds to deal with Frost." He timed it. "Now we move on a few paces to the basement steps."

Handing Mason the briefcase, Blanding resumed. "Skip down to Miss Logan's car, get under it and wedge this between the exhaust pipe and the frame. Then skip back up here quick as you can."

Mason disappeared down the steps. In a minute he was back.

Blanding walked with him to the ballroom door, where he exposed his watch. It was 11:37.

"So the entire prowl took just seven minutes."

Dismissing Mason, the inspector returned to Hatch's office. There he sat down to brood through three more cigarettes.

An odd remark of Hatch's came back to him. He recalled the manager's words: "When I came in here at eleven, I had a vague feeling that something wasn't just right. Couldn't put my finger on it. Then I became absorbed in my accounts and forgot all about it."

And half an hour later, Hatch had been held up.

Blanding concentrated, trying to make something out of it. He was still concentrating when a voice spoke to him from the doorway—the rear doorway giving into the lateral corridor. "You look fagged, Inspector. So I'm coming to your rescue."

IT WAS Anne Logan. She came cheerily in followed by a waiter with a tray. On the tray were sandwiches and a pot of tea.

"I'm sure you haven't had a bite since noon," she smiled.

"Not a morsel," Blanding admitted.

"And I know you haven't relaxed a single minute since the hold-up night before last."

It was true. And her thoughtfulness thrilled Blanding.

The waiter set the tray down and withdrew.

"I told Constable Croy to keep an eye on you," Blanding said.

"Here I am, sir." It was Croy speaking from the doorway.

Anne gave a nervous laugh. "He's been quite faithful, Inspector. It's made me feel frightfully important, having a guard all evening. But the poor man's sleepy. Won't you let him go home now? I'm retiring to my room, honest I am, just as soon as I pour you a cup of tea."

"Very well. You're dismissed, Croy. I'll see Miss Logan to her room myself."

Croy saluted and withdrew.

Anne poured tea for Blanding. She looked more than charming, he thought, and then realized with dismay that he himself must be presenting rather a jaded figure.

"I've heard a hundred weird rumors," Anne said. "Won't you tell me the truth about them?"

Over his second cup, he told her everything he knew. "Which winds it up," he concluded, "except for putting a name on the beggar."

"I wish I could help," Anne murmured.

He looked at her bright eyes and intelligent forehead. She was an artist. Maybe she could bring to bear an artist's perception. Her sense of proportions. An artist might be able to spot whatever vague disarrangement of the office had impressed itself subconsciously upon Hatch.

So Blanding repeated Hatch's statement. "Can you make anything of it?" he probed.

Anne looked about the room, her gaze fixing in turn upon each of its furnishings.

"Hatch came in at eleven, you see," Blanding prompted, "as was his custom, to work for an hour over accounts. It was then that he sensed something not quite as it should be. Half an hour later he was held up."

"By a tall, slim man," Anne added thoughtfully.

"That's it. By a tall thin man who stood directly across the table with a gun."

"And when Mr. Hatch came to consciousness after being knocked out, did he still sense something out of place? Oh, but of course, he didn't! The out-of-placeness was gone then!" Anne jumped excitedly to her feet. "I've a perfectly stupendous idea, Inspector."

"What?"

"It's that the criminal came in for a moment just before eleven, when the office was empty."

"But what for?"

"To set the stage for his crime at eleven-thirty."

Blanding stared. "I'm afraid I don't get it," he said.

"All right. Then step out into the hall just for a minute. While you're gone, I'll set the stage like I think the man did."

She was quite in earnest. And Dale Blanding was in a mood to try anything. "Very well," he agreed, and stepped out into the rear corridor.

In less than half a minute she called him back. "The stage is set," she announced. "Do you sense anything out of place?"

For the life of him, he couldn't see anything out of place.

"Then please sit down in Mr. Hatch's chair at the table, and pretend to be absorbed in accounts.

With a sheepish grin, Blanding complied.

"I'll be the hold-up man," Anne said. "I slip in quietly and you don't see me till I have the gun on you. Close your eyes and count ten, while I come in."

Blanding closed his eyes. After counting ten, he opened them again.

He saw Anne standing directly across the table from him, in the position from which the hold-up man had menaced Hatch.

With her finger pointed at him, as though it were a pistol, she asked, *"How tall is Anne?"*

In his astonishment he missed her paraphrase of an old and stock puzzle query. "Shoot me," he blurted, "if you're not a good six feet!"

Stepping quickly around to her side of the table, he saw why.

Anne laughed. "I'm really only five feet six, thank heavens. But when I stand on a Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, it makes me six feet."

His eyes darted to the dictionary stand, where a few minutes ago a huge unabridged dictionary had been in place, open.

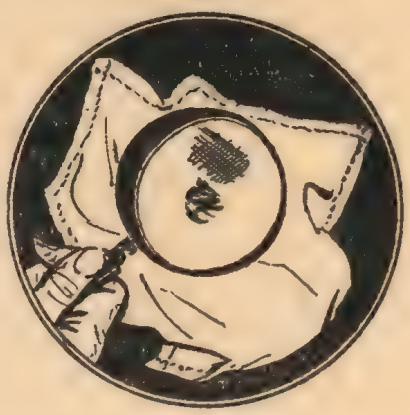
TO BLANDING it was now painfully clear. Prior to eleven o'clock, the thief had entered to set the stage. Incidentally it accounted for his foreknowledge that a briefcase would be conveniently here for him to carry away loot in. His stage-setting had consisted simply in placing that dictionary on the floor directly beyond the table from Hatch's chair. Then, at eleven-thirty, he had re-entered quietly to stand upon that six-inch platform.

"And after knocking Mr. Hatch out," Anne offered, "he put the dictionary back on the stand, open, as left by whoever had last looked up a word."

"But what made you think of it?"

"You see, the man was in a frightful hurry to be gone, night before last. So he didn't notice that he put the dictionary back on the stand *upside-down.*"

"Upside-down?"



"It was open in the middle, at the M's. And all the capital M's looked like W's. Whoever had last looked up a word wouldn't leave it that way, so it must have been the bandit."

Blanding flushed. "A fine detective I am! It means I owe an apology to every tall slim man in this hotel."

"I'm glad I could help," Anne smiled.

"Wait! you can help still more." It was Blanding's turn to be inspired now. "I told Croy I'd see you to your room. Come."

He ushered her out into the rear corridor and to the stairs which ascended from there. "You have Suite two twenty-six, haven't you?"

"Yes." Why, Anne wondered, didn't he take her up by the lobby lift?

They ascended one flight to Number 226. Anne used her key to open the suite's sitting room. "Good-night," she said.

But he stepped inside with her. "Lock the door, please," he directed. "Then telephone the Mounted Police barracks and ask me to come here on the run."

"But you're already here!"

"Never mind that." He instructed her specifically what to say to the sergeant on duty at the barracks.

Anne went to her room phone and made the call. Being connected with the bar-

racks she said, "This is Anne Logan in Suite two twenty-six, at the Grand Glacier. Please tell Inspector Blanding to come here quickly."

When the sergeant naturally inquired, "What's up, Miss?" she went on in a tone of agitation. "It's dreadfully important. I've just found out who crawled under my car at the lakeshore. Tell Inspector Blanding to hurry."

Anne turned from the phone with eyes bright. She sensed now what was coming.

"Better lock yourself in the bedroom," Blanding suggested.

She went into the bedroom.

In the sitting room, Blanding drew his revolver.

Then he heard a furtive step in the hall. He saw the doorknob turn. A stealthy hand was testing the lock.

Being locked, the door did not give. Then came the faint, cautious insertion of a key. The lock clicked. The door pushed slowly open.

The first thing to enter was the muzzle of a Colt's .45. The same gun, no doubt, which had held up Hatch.

The man gripping it, slight in build and not over five feet six inches tall, stepped suddenly into the room.

Blanding said quietly, "Drop that gun." His own was ready and cocked.

The shock of seeing him there cracked the last, hair-triggered nerve of Night Clerk Artie Welch. His funk made him squeeze the trigger and a bullet fanned Blanding. The inspector himself fired, once, dropping his man on the threshold.

Anne came rushing from the bedroom. She saw a red scratch on Blanding's cheek. "Are you hurt?" she asked anxiously.

"I ought to be, for muffing it like this. It was Hatch, confound him, who threw me off by describing a tall man."

"In a dinner suit, too," she comforted.

"This beggar must have worn a dinner shirt and vest under his regular work coat, night before last. It would only take him a few seconds to change coats and ties. And the gun, of course, would be one the hotel always keeps at the registry desk. Stupid of me, what? Welch was the only man in the lobby for those seven minutes. And tonight, being a desk clerk, he'd of course have access to the pass key needed to enter both Room six-sixteen and this one."

"How did you know he'd come dashing up?"

"Because he acts as telephone exchange after midnight, on all room calls. If guilty, and asked by an excited witness to plug in the police, he'd of course listen in."

Two troopers from the barracks appeared breathlessly, in response to Anne's summons over the phone.

Blanding motioned to the prone figure of Welch. "He's only winged, Sergeant. Lock him up."

The troopers picked up Welch, twice a murderer, and carried him away.

Left alone with Anne Logan, embarrassment flushed Blanding to the roots of his hair. "Sorry I made such a mess of it. And thanks. Hang it all, you ought to be on the Force."

"I think I'd like it," Anne smiled.

"Good night," Dale Blanding said. What more could he say to the heiress of Logan Motors?

When he was gone, she went to her writing desk. There she began a letter to the one person in all the world from whom she never kept secrets.

The letter ended:

"—Imagine, Dad dear. He still doesn't even faintly suspect why I've come up here three straight summers! It's a mystery he'll never solve, I fear, unless I stand on a book and kiss him."

KEE-YI OF THE CLOUDS

By THOMAS FRANCIS NORRIS

The Sanctuary About Mile High Lake Was Harboring a Killer

AT MIDDAY, from the shelf-rock near the top of Red Granite Peak, there was a sudden whir of wings. Like a streak of feathered lightning, Kee-yi, a huge blue darter, intrepid brigand of the higher altitudes flashed into space for a kill. Five hundred feet below a V-flight of wild ducks was streaking across the wooded valley. They had unsuspectingly trespassed on an area in which the vandal of the air ruled with unchallenged authority.

In another instant the wild ducks grouped into a more compact mass, when apart from the melee of wings, there was a more frantic struggle, a hapless duck trying vainly to escape from the death-piercing talons of the blood-thirsty darter, who, after accomplishing his purpose, veered sharply away in a wide arc from the main body of the terror-stricken ducks.

It was tragedy, ruthless, uncompromising. But under the law of survival of the fittest, Kee-yi's supremacy remained undisputed. The rapidly thinning number of game-birds revealed the rapaciousness of his nature. On the ground or in water, the odds would have been against him but his

method of attack left no chance of defense. Kee-yi rose triumphantly above the lake with powerful strokes, for now he was in his own element where he took no risks.

Glenn Bufford saw the finish of the wild duck. He was standing on the willow-fringed bank of Mile High Lake, contemplating the soft blue haze against the balsam-clad foothills which surrounds the wide expanse of crystal-clear water. The valley beyond the lake resembled a giant platter scooped out by Mother Nature in long past eons. It was a sanctuary for all kinds of wild-life, and Glenn Bufford loved it, a vast stretch, thirty miles in length, varying from seven to fifteen miles in width. The Sangre de Christo range traversed the whole area. The balsam-clad hills, sloping down from lofty peaks above, provided a haven for grouse, pheasant, quail, and turkey. There were numerous lakes in the region, fed by extensive snow-fields in the higher altitudes, the largest being Mile High Lake, no more than a stone's throw from the base of Red Granite Peak. In this vast paradise, Kee-yi the Bold, followed a career in which he was master.

Glenn Bufford stood motionless for several seconds, a grim frown settling over his face, then his hand tightened on the breech of his .30-30.

"You feathered bully, if I ever get a bead on you, it will be finis for your career," he said vengefully.

If Kee-yi could have expressed his feelings verbally, his reaction could have been translated into, "You'll never get me, because I know you can't be trusted, for this reason, I intend to keep my distance."

THIS was only another incident in the feuds that had sprung up between hunter and hunted, the matching of human ingenuity against instinctive cunning.

Glenn Bufford was official forest ranger in the Red Granite Peak Preserve. While his actual duties had no connection with the preservation of wild-life in the area, he was aware of the destruction that birds of prey were making against the various kinds of game-fowl. Owing to fire hazards in the preserve, campfires and hunting had been prohibited, for throughout frequent dry seasons one small spark might start a conflagration. While these regulations had reduced the number of forest fires, the preserve was rapidly being populated with bob-cats, mountain lions, and wolves. But birds of prey, of which the blue darter was the more numerous, was the most destructive. All through the early summer months the poultry yards of the mountain farmers had been plundered, with game and song birds being driven away; the responsibility for the situation was chalked up against Kee-yi and his clan.

Kee-yi's wary nature told him, the only places of safety were beyond the reach of earthbound man, up in the higher altitudes on the leeward side of a windswept peak, or above a low-hanging cloud. As he dipped down from the upper air with the limp carcass of the wild duck, his sharp eyes swept over the landscape for a possible foe. Suddenly, his great wings pointed upward, he descended slowly until the man near the lake disappeared behind the balsam thickets. Then for several seconds he churned the air again with well-timed strokes and sailed leisurely into a remote cavern-eyrie beneath the shelf-rock which circled Red Granite Peak.

Kee-yi's mate was absent when his wings brushed against the side wall of the eyrie. Three feather-spotted fledglings, in a nest of moss on the floor, greeted him with hungry wails. Immediately, he began tearing off chunks of tender breast meat from the carcass and dropped them into the wide-open mouths of the ravenous brood. When their appetites were satisfied, he carried the balance of the blood-soaked mass to the shelf-rock where he stripped the rest of the flesh from the bones.

Bufford marked the spot where the vandal blue darter had disappeared from view, then with his unerring binoculars, he

walked back from the lake to a point where a view of the peak was available. He saw the ledge-like shelf, which he estimated to be from two to three feet in width, extending around the lake-side of the peak, the passageway was clear, except at one place where fragments of rock had been dislodged from above and were obstructing the ledge. Several feet below the ledge, he could see a narrow projection of rock which formed a covering over the entrance to the cavern-eyrie.

"This is the old boy's hang-out," Bufford said half-audibly, as he carefully studied the topography of the peak with nearby landmarks.

"There isn't much I can say about it," Bufford explained to one of the mountain farmers. "The only thing I can do now is to enforce regulations, even though it works a hardship on you people." Bufford always manifested an impersonal attitude toward everyone in the area which was one reason he had retained their respect.

Mark Hadden, who operated a large poultry farm, besides raising several hundred pheasant each season, in one of the canyons leading out from Red Granite Peak, was insisting on Bufford taking action against the feathered marauders.

"Understand, I'm not criticizing your work in the preserve, Mr. Bufford," he temporized. "But I don't want those blue darters carrying off any more of my springs. So if you don't go gunning after 'em pretty soon, there's going to be some law-breaking." There wasn't the slightest doubt from Hadden's manner, that he didn't mean every word of the statement.

"Wait a few days," parleyed Bufford.

"You can shoot pretty straight," Hadden insisted. "Bag a few of these blue darters each day and we'll soon be rid of 'em."

"Guess you're right," Bufford admitted with a pleasant smile.

Everyone in the Red Granite Peak preserve respected Glenn Bufford's prowess with a gun. He could center a bull's eye, nine times out of ten at a hundred paces. With his .38, which he always carried, he could pierce a tin-can thrown into the air, four times in succession before it hit the ground. He even could split an acorn, ten steps away with a hunting-knife.

KEE-YI and his mate had spent five successive summers in the same cavern-eyrie below the shelf-rock. Along about the middle of April, each succeeding year they'd return from the tropical climate where they spent their winters, and repair the damage done to their eyrie during their absence. Kee-yi was much larger than the average blue darter, nearly eighteen inches from beak to the tip of his rounded tail feathers, with a wing-spread of thirty inches. In flight, he was the swiftest of all the birds of prey in the region, his powerful wings propelled him with such force that he could easily overtake a victim in flight.

The encounter with the wild duck was as fine a stroke in banditry as one would care to witness. Kee-yi gave no quarter. Survival in that vast stretch of wooded hills had sharpened his instinctive cunning. When he struck, he did so with all the ferocity of his nature. Opportunity determined all action. Bufford knew this and was constantly alert for the brigand of the air to demonstrate his skill. A mile above the lake as the forest ranger was descending the trail from the Divide he witnessed more of Kee-yi's depredations.

Spiraling at a dizzy height, a bald-eagle was acting queerly. In a flash it swooped downward, the zooming sound of its wings plainly audible. Bufford raised his glasses to follow the eagle's descent to the edge of the lake. A short distance away from where he alighted another eagle was stripping the feathers from a wounded duck. The forest ranger knew a battle was imminent. Now, while the first eagle was defending his rights against the newcomer, Kee-yi, flashed in for a feast. What he lacked in size was more than offset by speed.

The unsuspecting eagle, toppled and

rolled ten feet away with Kee-yi's first thrust. Uncertain over the source of the attack, he chased after the other eagle who was perched on a rock a few feet away. In a split-second the blue darter was back, his sharp talons lowered; he grappled the duck, and climbed into the air with mighty strokes. The astonished eagles were greeted with his racuous cry of triumph, "Kee-yi, kee-yi, kee-yi!"

Glenn Bufford was the first actual observer of the methods of the marauding darter. He watched him with mixed admiration and contempt as he made good his escape with the wounded duck.

"You treacherous vandal, I see you like your ducks dressed," he said, "but there's going to be an accounting some day, blast your bones!"

Kee-yi was exactly as the mountain farmers represented him, a ruthless brigand of the air who preyed upon their defenseless flocks of poultry. "I saw that blood-thirsty villain today," or, "He made another killing in my yard last night," could only mean one thing: Kee-yi had been following his regular pursuits. So when the rural mail carrier met Bufford along the route and pulled over to one side of the road, it was the same story.

"Howdy, Ranger!" he grinned. "Just wanted to tell you that Mark Hadden's got blood in his eye. He's ordered enough shells to supply a whole regiment. So don't be surprised if you happen to hear artillery in action," said the mail carrier, driving away in a chuckle.

Kee-yi was no longer a mystery to Glenn Bufford. He never killed other feathered life for the thrill of a fight, but to gratify an insatiable craving for food and went about it in a natural way to supply that need. Immediately following a kill he gorged himself, bolting down chunks of flesh with gluttoneous delight, always preferring the tender breast portions. If there was more than he could consume at one setting, he returned later on the same day for another feeding.

Kee-yi kept a well regulated schedule, leaving the cavern-eyrie each morning shortly after sunrise, and on most occasions, long before other feathered life were abroad. If he succeeded in making a kill on the first trip out, he returned to the rendezvous where he remained until hunger struck him again. Comparatively speaking, he kept later hours than other day-hunters. Along about sundown he would coast home leisurely, his alert eyes ever ready to detect some songster which would provide a lunch before turning in for the night.

Bufford also discovered that the male darter has an enduring affection for both mate and fledgling. When in their presence, he sidles up with a soft, hissing sound which in their language is a message of devotion.

BUFFORD saw Kee-yi frequently the rest of that summer but never within gun-range, and always on the wing as he secured his food in flight. In this respect he was different from other birds of prey that sit drowsily on some dead tree-trunk or other projection from which they pounce upon the victim. On a bright sunny day, he could be seen coursing steadily at dizzy heights against a wind, watching for an unsuspecting bird to pass below.

Kee-yi had made a mockery out of all the efforts of the mountain farmers to get him. His was a wariness of all things human, and a sense of danger from that source, acted so wisely, keeping his distance until the time was opportune to strike. But Bufford's determination to waylay the killer was constantly on his mind.

Up until this time, the ranger supposed the villainous darter had frightened all other birds from the area. Unexpectedly one day he saw Kee-yi heading for the cavern-eyrie at an unusually fast speed. On closer observation, he discovered he was being pursued by a pair of plucky king birds who were taking their toll of feathers from the blue darter's back. Bufford de-

cided that Kee-yi must have ventured too close to the nest of the king birds and was paying dearly for his boldness. At about half-minute intervals, first one, then the other pugnacious little bird would dive in for a feather. But when they were within a few hundred yards of the eyrie, the tide of battle turned. Kee-yi shot upward, making a complete flip-flop in the air, catching one of the king birds in vise-like talons, and suddenly vanished into his lofty hideaway.

Far up under the shelf-rock in the mist-shrouded peak, Kee-yi the Bold had turned in to the peace and contentment of his eyrie-home, perhaps to gloat over the exploits of the day. A full grown pheasant, two wild pigeons, a red-wing black bird, devoured in flight; the freshly stripped bones of the pheasant and the pigeons had rattled down the steep declivity from the shelf-rock, attested mutely to the day's activities.

Notoriously, Kee-yi was enemy Number One in the Red Granite Peak Preserve. His doom was foresworn. Bufford devised a plan to waylay him, secreting himself in the balsam thickets between the lake and the peak. He took up the vigil shortly after the pair of blue darters left the cavern-eyrie in anticipation of their return after the first kill.

ONE hour passed without either of the vandal birds putting in an appearance. Came noon, their long absence seemed more mysterious. Late in the evening the ranger gave up the watch after deciding that in some way his presence had been discovered. It became a moot question in his mind as to whether the wary darters had some method of discovering a lurking danger.

Storm clouds were slowly advancing toward the peak in direct opposition to a strong current of upper-air, their puff-ball edges tinted with the gold of sunset. Bufford was fascinated with the interplay of sun, cloud, and wind. Suddenly he noted two dark specks emerging from above the flying clouds. Bringing his binoculars into play, amazement struck him.

"By the gods, if that isn't old Kee-yi and his mate, I'll eat my hat," he exclaimed in surprise. He estimated their altitude at nearly a mile. Both birds were playfully darting about against the buffeting gale. For brief periods they'd disappear above the cloud, presently to re-appear as before. He watched their antics with increasing interest.

"Kee-yi of the clouds!" mused the ranger in a moment of admiration. "That's a good name for you. It's too bad you couldn't use your talents for better things when you're nearer the ground." After another interval, both birds dropped down under the cloud-bank, then folding their wings, they shot down to about half their former altitude.

Marveling over their flying skill, Bufford's grim determination to exterminate them gave away to one of pity, until he discovered their abrupt descent was not without murderous motives. They had swerved sharply in pursuit of a flock of wild pigeons that was coursing above the lake toward the wooded hills beyond. He waited another fifteen minutes, eyes following the sky-line above the balsam-clad hills. Just as he decided to call it a day, there was a zooming sound in the direction of the peak. Turning quickly, he saw the pair of killers disappear behind the wooded slope above.

Beaten and dejected, Bufford started home. "Old Kee-yi pulled a fast one on me this time, dang his feathered hide!" he said solemnly. He began to feel his responsibility to the mountain farmers more than ever after the failure of his plan.

Returning homeward in mid-afternoon of the next day, the faint sound of three gunshots in quick succession came to his ears. He thought they came from within the preserve and immediately Mark Hadden's threat came to his mind. If one of those farmers started using guns, they'd all do it. As no moisture had fallen for over a month, the undergrowth in the preserve

was dry as tinder. A smoking shell dropped carelessly, or a shot through a blind of dead grass might start a conflagration.

"Just can't let that happen," Bufford decided gravely. But he hesitated over taking any action against the long-suffering farmers. If he could only bag old Kee-yi, they'd be satisfied and wouldn't make an attempt to take things in their own hands.

It was quite easy to make plans for the capture of the darters, but more difficult to execute them. Reining in his horse to a stop, Bufford raised his glasses for a careful recheck of the peak. For a full minute he examined the shelf-rock where it disappeared behind the side and was lost to view. Hope mounted. There was a possibility of reaching this passage-way from the farther side of the peak where he knew the ascent would be less abrupt. He also knew it would be a severe test of human endurance as there was a half-mile of brambled thickets. Above this a shale slope reached up and the slightest disturbance would cause a slide which might prove disastrous; from this level, sharp crags and almost percipitous walls of rock which only could be scaled with the aid of a rope.

A short time after his first arrival at the preserve he had attempted to make the ascent from the farther side of the peak, but gave up after reaching the shale slope. The most hazardous part of the plan, was the ascent that would have to be made before daybreak in order to be ready when the birds left their cavern-eyrie. But there wasn't any time to lose as the fledglings would be ready to fly in a few more weeks. After that any disturbance would be likely to cause the whole family to leave for the tropics.

ANOTHER disappointment came to Bufford. Dark, ominous clouds had covered the peak; the rainy season had started. Creeks and arroyos were bank full of rushing water. His patience had reached the breaking point. "Those darn killers will win out yet," he said dubiously. For two weeks he rode fence with frequent checks to see that flood-gates were holding which were safeguards against inundations. Visibility was so poor that even the outline of the peak couldn't be seen. By luck, he happened to see Kee-yi sailing low over the lake to grapple an unsuspecting fish. It was consoling to know that the darters were still in the preserve even though they were compelled to subsist on a diet of fish.

When the weather finally cleared, it turned cold. This meant frost and the departure of the blue darters for their winter home. Long before daybreak with the aid of a flashlight and a rope, Bufford started out on the hazardous climb up the peak.

It was slow progress through the brambled thickets. An unseen limb of dogwood raked his cheek, smarting sharply. Blood trickled down over his face as he pushed on. Finally he reached timber-line which extended up to the shale-slope whose dark, ascending bank had a sinister aspect. Breathing heavily from exertion, he sat down to rest. The dank odor of shifting shale from above reached his nostrils, and the weird chanting of swirling winds around the peak above had an uncanny effect, perhaps a warning to give up the attempt to reach the rendezvous of the birds. Suddenly the nerves in the back of his head tightened.

"I'm going up, no matter what happens," he muttered doggedly.

FORCIBLY digging toes into the ever shifting shale, he began to climb. Five yards. Ten yards toward the goal, with each thrust into the soft bank, he slipped back almost as far as he ascended. Halfway up the slope, a dislodged boulder from above sped past him with terrific speed, carrying an avalanche of loose shale in its wake. Frantically, he sprawled with extended arms and legs to keep from being hurtled with the suffocating mass to

the brambled thickets below. After an hour of exhausting effort, he reached the level of jumbled boulders. Then after another trying period with the aid of a rope, he managed to reach the shelf-rock. There was a faint glow on the eastern horizon, but dense gloom shrouded the valley below.

Cautiously proceeding around the ledge, he was compelled to drop down on hands and knees to keep from being blown away by a terrific wind. Far below he could see the reflected light of early dawn shimmering faintly on Mile High Lake from which he got his bearings. Crawling slowly along, carefully examining the ledge as the wind battered his face with sand and gravel, he paused dubiously over the hazardous undertaking. Forty feet ahead, he saw the dim outline of the dislodged rock that had fallen from an upper portion of the peak. This was his goal! A few feet farther on, below the ledge, was the cavern-eyrie. Thus fortified, he began the final lap of his adventure. Then inch by inch along the narrow passageway, a slight movement to the left meant disaster, and Eternity!

As the light of the new day began to appear on the peak, the wind increased in velocity. Nearing the pile of fallen debris, he stared over the ledge where the outline of the projecting rock over the cavern-eyrie became distinguishable. After a few seconds, he raised up on his elbows and then peered furtively over the pile of debris, an unexpected sight met his eyes that made his blood turn icy cold.

Bufford had known a just share of disappointments, but this was the worst; on the narrow ledge he saw a bob-cat looking intently down at the projecting rock over the cavern-eyrie. The cat was apparently preparing to leap down on the narrow footing to capture the blue darters as they emerged from their rendezvous. Bufford knew that the slightest sound would arouse the birds. His hand tightened on the .38. For a split-second, anger flared in his brain. "I'm not going to let that beast spoil my plans," he muttered hotly. Instantly another thought flashed into his mind as the cat leaped down gracefully to the projection.

"Go to it, old boy! You start the rumpus, and I'll finish off the whole mess." He had seen many bob-cats in the locality but never expected to find one here.

The rasping of claws on the rock aroused the darters. Like a flash of light, they darted out. At first sight of the bob-cat, the feathered killers swooped down for battle. The valley below echoed back their piercing cries. Kee-yi! Kee-yi! Kee-yi! The life and death struggle at the top of Red Granite Peak was on. Bufford thrilled at the boldness of the pair of marauding birds.

First one blue darter, then the other, struck fiercely with beak and talons. The cat, countering desperately with, Pst! Pst! Pst!, raking the air with vicious thrusts of his sharp claws. The darters, in their own element, darted back and forth from opposite directions, harrying their adversary from the air, while the cat had little more than standing room on the projection. A mis-step and he'd dash headlong below. On his haunches, back against the wall, fighting desperately in a contest which ob-

viously had been underestimated, he found himself in a precarious situation.

THE mother darter swept in, slashing the cat along the breast while he was vainly trying to ward off the more vicious thrusts of the male darter. Instantly the cat countered at the mother bird so ferociously that he wavered in an attempt to regain his balance, but Kee-yi ripped along the flank before he had adjusted himself on the cramped space of the projection. Snarling angrily, the cat leaped upward, then plunged down with sickening suddenness into the abyss, a thousand feet below, its body rebounding against the wall of the peak in the descent, a bloody mass of crushed bones and flesh.

"It's now or never!" Bufford shook himself out of a tranced fascination as Kee-yi wheeled after the cat. A shot cracked sharply in the upper-air, then another in quick succession. He waited tensely to see if he had hit his mark. Suddenly a swift current of air from lower levels threshed up a cloud of feathers from the plunging darters. A flutter of wings drew his attention from below the shelf-rock. Three fledglings flopped out of the cavern-eyrie. He knew it was their first attempt to fly as they struggled desperately to sustain themselves in the air.

Again Ranger Bufford pressed the trigger. "It's a fade-out for the whole bunch of you," he said as three more shots rang out simultaneously.

Bufford turned quickly, then retraced his way along the shelf-rock. It was nearly noon when he reached the willowed edge of Mile High Lake. After searching around for a time in the balsam thickets he found the carcass of the bob-cat, a short distance away, he came across the female darter and the three fledglings; another half-hour elapsed in a search for Kee-yi. Finally he sat down on a boulder completely exhausted.

"I wonder—?" He never completed the question as he glanced into the sky and saw the vandal-killer flying at a great height. Leveling his glasses on him to make sure of his identity, he shook his head solemnly. "That's him all right."

Bufford held the glasses on the old marauder until he reached the sand-flats in the open country. He was headed southward, alone, but unvanquished, churning the air with powerful strokes of his mighty wings.

Suddenly he shot up into a higher altitude, quickly disappearing behind a silver-lined cloud.

Bufford shook his head. He had failed to get the valiant battler; but somehow, he wasn't sorry as he started home. Old Kee-yi had earned his liberty, and now someone else would have to try and bring him down as he sought another area for his banditry. For Bufford was certain the marauding ace would be too wise to return after the draw they had fought on Red Granite Peak that morning.

There Are All Sides to the Banking Business

PART II

THE HUNGRY DOG

(Something about Part I)

JOHNNY FLETCHER and his companion—SAM CRAGG are rather down on their luck when they are informed an uncle of Sam's has died and left him his estate. The two go post haste to the neighborhood of St. Louis to take up the inheritance. There they meet—

GEORGE TOMPKINS, an insufferable youth who says he's been living with Sam's uncle for years and from him they learn Sam's inheritance consists of two hundred Saint Bernard dogs—and no money to buy them food, with meat bills already piled up. There then appears—

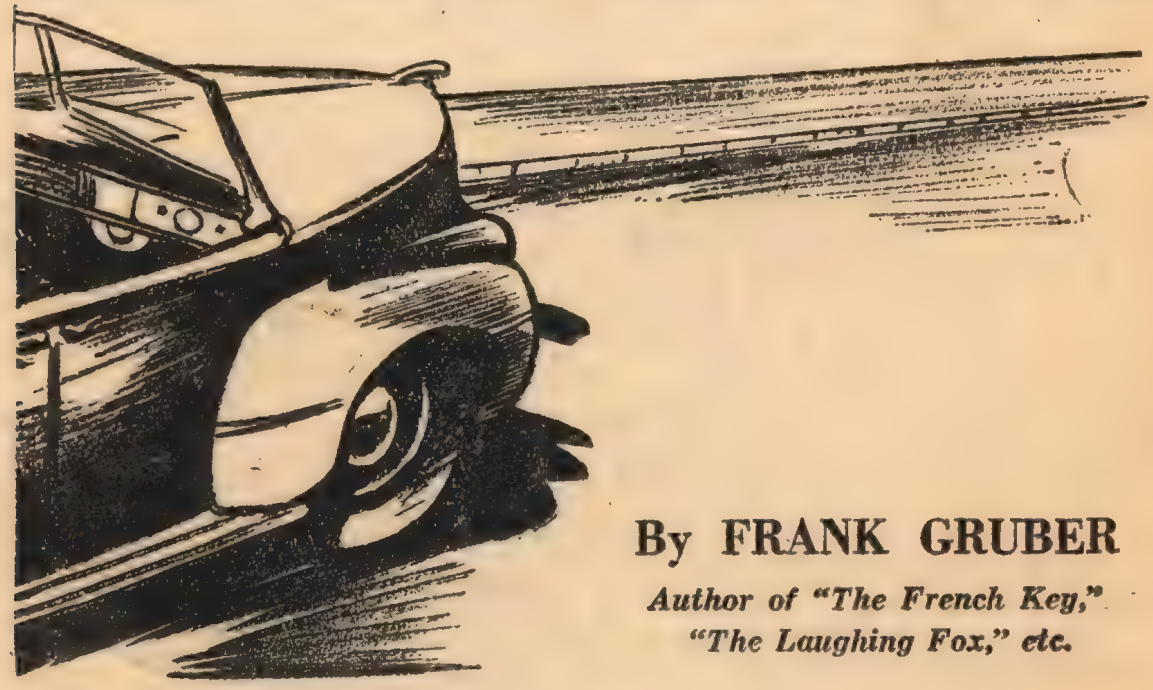
GERALD POTTS, lawyer for the estate, and from him they learn that Sam's Uncle Julius was murdered—a challenge to Johnny's detective faculties, but that won't feed the dogs. They meet—

SUSAN WEBB, a neighbor, whose father had a feud with Sam's uncle and also encounter the—

PENDLETON family, manufacturers of slot machine games, who claim that they had repaid Sam's uncle a large sum of money they'd borrowed. "Sam," says Johnny, "we haven't got a chance in the world to win this game so let's give it a whirl."

VIII

THE town of Deming consisted of two blocks of store buildings, split by a through highway. There were four or five blocks of residences behind each business block.



By FRANK GRUBER

Author of "The French Key," "The Laughing Fox," etc.

The Deming Trust Company was on a corner. Directly opposite was the First National Bank of Deming. Both were two-story brick buildings, with the bank occupying the first floor and the offices the second.

Johnny parked the station wagon a half block from the building. He and Sam climbed out and walked toward the bank. Just as they were about to enter Susan Webb came out. She was accompanied by a stocky, well-built man in tweeds. He was about forty-five.

She seemed to wince as she recognized Johnny and Sam. From the way she started to nod, Johnny got the impression that she intended to pass them by. He maneuvered into her path and suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, good morning, Miss Webb."

The girl crimsoned. "Good morning, Mr. Fletcher. And Mr. Cragg. Father—Mr. Fletcher—Mr. Cragg."

James Webb's head whipped up. "Cragg, eh?" He sniffed as his eyes photographed Sam. "You look just like your uncle, the sanctimonious old hypocrite."

"Father!"

"Well, he was," James Webb said stoutly. "Everybody knows what I thought of Julius Cragg."

"Tsk! Tsk!" said Johnny. "Rest his soul."

Webb snorted. "Not Cragg. He isn't playing any harp now. And as for you, young man, go right in and see Quadland. He's looking for you. Come, Susan!"

He brushed past Johnny. As Susan went by she caught Johnny's eyes and shook her head.

Johnny began grinning, but Sam Cragg muttered. "Who does that bird think he is, running down my uncle like that?"

"He's the father of one swell looking girl."

"You're not getting soft about her, Johnny?" Sam asked, alarm in his tone.

"You can't tell, Sam. Her old man's pretty well heeled and I'm getting to the age where I'd just as soon marry a rich

girl as a poor one—especially if the rich girl's as good looking as Susan Webb."

Sam's forehead creased, but he refrained from further comment as they were entering the bank.

Johnny looked quickly about the interior of the money factory. There were three tellers' cages down one side, and a vault in the rear. Near the front was a low-railinged enclosure, in which a pleasant-faced man sat behind a desk, reading the *Financial News*. Behind his desk was a door marked "Private."

Johnny swung open the gate of the enclosure and advanced upon the door. The pleasant-faced man put down his newspaper.

"Yes, sir, anything I can do for you?"

"I've got some business with Henry," Johnny replied and pushed open the door of the private office. Sam Cragg followed close at his heels.

Henry Quadland was almost a twin of his brother, the dog-meat man, except that he looked even meaner. He was engaged in the very unfinancial task of trying to assemble a jig-saw puzzle.

The guilty expression on his face as he jerked up his head quickly changed to one of anger. "What do you mean, breaking into my office like this?" he demanded.

"Why, I understood you wanted to see us," Johnny retorted. "This is Mr. Cragg. My name's Fletcher."

A WOLFISH grin spread over the banker's face. "Ah, Mr. Cragg, yes. I was just about to write you a letter. To tell you that the bank is being compelled to exercise the deed of trust on your—dog farm."

"What's a deed of trust?" Sam asked, innocently.

"A little business invented by bankers," Johnny explained, grimly. "On a straight mortgage it takes them a long time to foreclose and the mortgagee always has a chance of buying back his property, within a certain length of time. With a deed of trust they can sell you out on a moment's notice—"

"Thirty days," said Henry Quadland.

"Provided we don't pay the amount of the deed when it is presented."

"Eh?"

"How much does it amount to with interest?"

Quadland shrugged. "I'd have to look it up. Of course, we'll probably lose money on the transaction."

"Why?"

"Because the farm won't bring fifteen thousand at a forced sale."

"Is that so? Hm, maybe we'd better wait then and buy it in at the sale."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, we were just going to pay off the deed—at face value. However, if you're going to foreclose and sell the farm at auction——"

Quadland blinked and then a flush started at the base of his throat and worked upward. "You mean you have—the money to repay the loan on the deed?"

"Did anyone say we didn't?"

Quadland cleared his throat. "Why, my brother——"

"Your brother jumped to conclusions, just like you did. He insulted me so I told him to go whistle up a tree for his money. As for you, Mr. Quadland, you can go and get yourself a whistle—a *big* whistle. Come, Sam, we'll take our business elsewhere."

Henry Quadland's mouth was wide open when Johnny turned and slammed out of the office. But when they reached the sidewalk, Sam whispered in an agonized tone:

"Gee, Johnny, you didn't have to get him sore like that, did you? He'll put the screws on us, now."

"He'd already put them on, so the only thing I could do was make a big exit—in the hope that it'll get around."

"What do you mean, get around?"

"I don't know. It couldn't hurt—and it might do some good. Have you ever

noticed, Sam, that if a town's big enough to have a Rotary Club it's always got a rival club, too—a Kiwanis or Lions. The soreheads who can't get into the first club always start a new one. It's the same with banks. If there's one bank in a town, there's always a second—to take care of the soreheads. Maybe I can do some business with the sorehead bank in this burg."

"You'll have to do it pretty darn quick, then, Johnny, because those dogs'll be hungry by the time we get back."

Johnny groaned. "I almost forgot that herd of elephants. I guess we better run back to the place and find out from Binns which grocers we already owe money. I don't want to blunder into the wrong store and ask for a half-ton of hamburger."

They returned to the station wagon and Johnny drove gloomily back to the dog farm. As they entered the yard, Sam exclaimed:

"Pipe the jalopy, Johnny. With New York plates."

It was a king of jalopies, a Cadillac just a little short of fifty feet in length and enough nickel chromium to open a store. A colored chauffeur, in a tailored olive-green uniform, sat behind the wheel, reading a copy of *True Love Tales.*

As Johnny stopped the station wagon and climbed out, the door of the kennel building opened and Binns came out with a man who was undoubtedly the owner of the gasoline locomotive.

He signaled to Sam, "Mr. Cragg, this is Mr. Faraday—from New York. He's come to look at the dogs."

Johnny took a deep breath and stepped ahead of Sam. "Mr. Faraday, this is *indeed* a pleasure."

Mr. Faraday wore baggy tweed trousers and a coat with huge leather buttons. Johnny would have disdained to wear his shapeless hat, even in his poorest days.

He ignored Johnny's outstretched hand. "I want Mohawk the Seventh," he snapped. "And I'll pay two hundred and twenty-five dollars. Not a penny more."

A bright light leaped into Johnny's eyes. "Two and a quarter for Mohawk the Seventh? Oh, come, Mr. Faraday, you're joking! Mohawk's worth five times that amount and you know it."

"I don't know it!" howled Faraday. "I only know that every one of you chaps act the same. The minute you hear Martin Faraday's interested in a dog you triple the price. It's not the money, sir, it's the principle of the thing. I *will not* be gypped. I know perfectly well that you'd sell that dog to anyone else for two hundred and twenty-five and that's all I'm going to pay for him."

"Mr. Faraday," said Johnny, drawing a deep breath, "I'm going to amaze you. I'm not going to charge you two hundred and twenty-five dollars for that beautiful dog on which you've got your heart set. In fact, I'm not going to charge you anything for him. I'm going to make you a present of him. He's yours, free, gratis, with the compliments of Mr. Cragg and myself."

MARTIN FARADAY stared at Johnny in astonishment. "What was that, young man?"

"Mohawk the Seventh's yours, Mister Faraday. That's all there's to it."

"It isn't, there's a catch to it. I know there is."

Johnny gave Mr. Faraday a reproachful look. Then he sighed, "Binns, get Mohawk for Mr. Faraday. Go ahead. I mean it."

Sam Cragg stepped up beside Johnny. "Don't, Johnny," he whispered hoarsely. "We need the dough."

Martin Faraday looked darkly at Johnny. "You can't do that, young man. I'll give you three hundred for the dog."

"No," Johnny said, sadly. "I said I was making you a present of Mohawk and I mean it. You can't pay a cent for him."

"Five hundred," snapped Faraday. "But that's all."

Johnny shook his head. "If you won't

take him as a present, you can't have him. That's final."

Faraday swore angrily. "You can't do that. You know I want that dog, but you can't *give* him to me. I apologize for the way I lit into you a few minutes ago. Forget it."

"I *have* forgotten it, Mr. Faraday. But look—we've got two hundred dogs. We can give one away, without missing him—too much. But I'll tell you what, Mr. Faraday, if you feel under any obligation, why there's something you can do in return. Just a small thing——"

A gleam of suspicion came into Faraday's eyes. "What?"

JOHNNY turned and looked at the road yacht. He allowed a dreamy look to come into his eyes. "Why, sir, I've always wanted to ride in a car like that. I guess—well, this sounds kind of silly, but I guess we all have our little whimsies. As a matter of fact, I'd like to have one or two friends *see* me riding in that car. Over at our town, Deming."

Faraday cocked his head to one side. "Are you serious?"

"I really am, Mr. Faraday." Johnny put all the wistfulness in his tone that he could summon.

Faraday snorted. "Well, get in, then, man. Get in and I'll drive you wherever you want to go. I'll even park the car in front of your friends' homes and blow the horn so they'll be sure to see you."

"That," said Johnny, "is the idea. Only—er, could you do it so these people—my friends—will sort of get the idea that the car is mine? I mean, they'll know different afterward, but until they find out, they'll buzz about it."

Mr. Faraday smiled fondly. "I'll do that little thing. Any way you like."

"Will you? Then, would you mind staying right here for a half hour or so and just let your chauffeur drive me and my pal over to Deming and sort of blow the horn whenever we ask him to?"

Martin Faraday bestowed upon Johnny the sort of look he would have given a six-year-old child who handed him a bouquet of dandelions.

"Why, certainly, I'll stay here and romp with the dogs. Archibald! You're under Mr. Cragg's orders. Take him wherever he wants to go—and do whatever he wants you to. Understand?"

The chauffeur showed a mouthful of

gold inlays. "Yas, Mr. Faraday. Ah, understands."

Just then Binns came out of the kennels leading a tremendous St. Bernard. Martin Faraday began to pat the animal and Johnny seized the moment to whisper to Sam:

"Run up to our room and look in the pigskin bag. There's a checkbook in it—on the Wheat Exchange Bank in New York. Bring it down."

"Johnny," Sam exclaimed in concern, "have you gone crazy? You haven't got any money in that bank—you drew it out before we left town."

"I know, but there are still some checks left. I want them—and while you're about it, bring down that horse blanket sport coat I bought last year in a weak moment. Don't ask questions, I know what I'm doing."

SAM'S expression told very plainly that he did not believe Johnny, but he trotted off toward the house. While he was gone, George Tompkins came up from the fields, with Oscar, the yard St. Bernard, lumbering along behind him.

"Some boat," George said, regarding the car. His mouth twisted and Johnny stepped forward quickly. "Get into the house, George," he whispered savagely. "This is big business and I'm not going to have you queer it. I mean it—"

A wisecrack died on George's lips. He shrugged and strolled away again. Johnny looked at Oscar and frowned.

"Hello, Oscar, old boy," he said experimentally.

Oscar looked at him through half-closed lids, but his huge tail wagged a little. Johnny moved forward cautiously and patted the big head, poised meanwhile on the balls of his feet, ready for instant traveling if Oscar repelled his advances.

The St. Bernard submitted and Johnny drew a deep breath. "Binns," he said loudly, "go and get me that dog from the second kennel. And bring me a couple of leashes."

He smiled at Faraday, who was playing with Mohawk the Seventh. "You don't mind if I take a dog or two in the car, do you?"

"No, of course not. Say, Mohawk is certainly a fine fellow, isn't he?"

"He sure is," replied Johnny. "Just about the best St. Bernard I've ever seen." Which was a downright lie. Johnny could not tell one dog from another. As far as he was concerned, Oscar, the yard dog, was an identical twin of Mohawk.

Binns returned with a dog and a couple of leashes. He fastened them to the collars of Oscar and the other dog and handed the leashes to Johnny. Just then Sam returned from the house, carrying a checked tweed coat that would have caught the eye of any Pinkerton man at a race-track.

Sam's nostrils twitched nervously as he stopped beyond leash distance of Johnny's dogs. "What's the idea, Johnny?" he asked, in a low voice.

"Why, we're going to take these boys for a ride, Sammy. They need a little change of scenery, you know."

"Well," said Sam, "I'll see you when you get back."

"Get in the car, Sam," Johnny snapped.

Sam's face turned gray. He hesitated for a moment, then with the air of a man stepping into the execution chamber climbed into the Cadillac. Johnny paused only to speak to Mr. Faraday.

"We'll be back in a half hour or so, Mr. Faraday. It's certainly fine of you to indulge a whim of mine."

"Not at all, sir. Take an hour if you like."

The St. Bernards climbed into the car and began piling up on top of Sam Cragg, who was too scared to ward them off. Johnny stepped in and closed the door.

"Down on the floor, mutts," he said.

One of the dogs, misunderstanding his order for an invitation, got off Sam and climbed up on Johnny. Johnny wrestled with the dog, not knowing if it was Oscar, the pet, or the kennel dog and not daring to be firm with him.

As the Cadillac rolled out of the drive onto the road, the dog's tongue was licking Johnny's face.

"Where to, Boss?" Archibald, the chauffeur asked.

"That bump in the road they call Deming, about three miles east—that's toward St. Louis. By the way, Archie, have you got a fountain pen?"

"Yes, sir, here it is."

Desperately Johnny dumped the St. Bernard to the floor. Surprisingly, it remained there. When Johnny returned the fountain pen to the chauffeur a moment later, he rescued Sam from the affection of the second St. Bernard.

Perspiration was pouring down Sam's face. "Johnny," he gasped in a whisper, "what's the matter with you? Do you—feel all right?"

"I haven't lost my mind, if that's what you mean."

"But this, Johnny! And refusing the five hundred for that pooch, when we need the money so badly."

"We need a lot more than five hundred. I got an idea back there and I decided to gamble—win everything, or lose everything. Give me that coat."

He shucked the coat he was wearing and then crumpled the Joseph's coat into a ball. He tossed it on the floor of the car, stamped on it with a foot, then shook it out and slipped it on. After which he took off his brown felt hat and put it through a similar process.

Sam cried out in anguish. "Johnny!"

Johnny smoothed out the hat as well as he was able, after the manhandling. He clapped it rakishly on his head and gave it a final buffeting.

"How do I look now, Sammy?"

A little gleam of understanding came into Sam's eyes. "Cripes, you're trying to look like Faraday—"

"Go to the head of the class, Sam. Only a rich man—a very rich man—can dress this sloppy. Wait a minute, I've got a crease in these trousers."

He remedied that, then leaned back against the luxurious upholstery and expanded. "The dogs are part of the act, Sam. Without them, and the car, I might be mistaken for a bum. But this way—it's a cinch."

"I wonder," said Sam, "what the jail in this town's like?"

"Probably crummy, but don't worry. Here's the burg. Archie—drive over to the bank, there, the First National."

Johnny peered out of the car window as Archie stopped the car. "About six feet more, Archie. That's fine; now tootle that horn a couple of times."

The horn tooted: "A-beep-a-beep!"

"Swell," said Johnny. "Now look, Archie, Mr. Faraday told you to do everything I ordered, didn't he?"

"Tha's right, Boss."

"Good. Then, here's what you do. Give that horn a blast every sixty seconds. After the third beep-a-beep—three minutes—you come dashing into the bank. Act excited and insist on seeing Mr. Fletcher right away. When you see me—no matter what I'm doing at the moment—bust right out and yell—let's see—yes, yell, 'Mr. Fletcher, I've just seen Mrs. Van Piltzer driving by. You want I should chase after and catch her Rolls?' You've got that, Archie?"

"Yas, sir. Ah beeps the horn every minute, then after the third beep Ah busts into the bank and yells, 'Mistuh Fletcher, Mrs. Van Piltzer's Rolls done just drove by, y'all want me to run after and catch it?' "

Johnny grinned. "That's right. You might put in, there, Mrs. Van Piltzer of Newport. Here I go, Sam, I'd better pull this one alone. You're not dressed properly."

Sam sighed in relief. "That suits me fine."

Johnny climbed out of the car and then grasping a leash in each hand, persuaded the St. Bernards to follow. Out of the corner of his eye, he looked toward the bank windows and saw a bald-headed, fat man staring out.

He said, "Give the horn a beep, now, Archie."

The big Cadillac had already attracted the attention of a number of local citizens, and as Johnny strolled toward the entrance of the bank a small traffic jam resulted.

In the bank, Johnny permitted one of

the dogs to upset a waste basket beside a writing stand. He exclaimed loudly, in the general direction of the tellers, "I say there, I'd like to see the president of this bank."

IX

THE nearest teller slammed up his wicket and stuck his head part way through the opening.

"Right over there, sir, in the private office."

Johnny rumbled a thanks, then headed the St. Bernards toward the private office. One of them crashed into a typewriter stand and only the alertness of the stenographer saved it from falling to the floor.

"Look where you're going, you stupid oxen," Johnny roared.

He twisted the knob of the bank president's office door and then let go of the leash of the right-hand dog. It charged into the room ahead of Johnny. The other dog almost jerked Johnny off his feet as it followed its mate.

"Hello," Johnny cried. "Look out there—!"

The freed St. Bernard rose on his back feet, to tremendous height, then let his front paws fall on the bank president's desk.

The nails weren't quite sharp enough to secure an anchorage and slipped on the mahogany desk top. A dozen letters followed the dog to the floor.

Johnny leaped forward and recaptured the leash of the dog, then straightening, looked into a twitching red face that was above a roly-poly body.

"Ha!" said Johnny. "You run this bank, do you? Fletcher's my name. From N'York. Just got here last night to sort of help out a friend of mine. He inherited a little property hereabouts and a bunch of your local sharpers are tryin' t'do him out of it. I figure to knock their ears down for 'em. That stupid oaf across the street who runs a mouse-box he calls a bank is one of them. But I s'pose y'know all about him, ha?"

"Henry Quadland? I sure do, Mister—Fletcher. By the way, my name's Kunkel, August Kunkel."

"H'arya, Kunkel. Like I was saying this cornfed loan shark's in with one of your small-time business men, fella name of Webb or Webster, or something like that. They thought to run a shindy on this friend of mine. The fools—I'll teach them a lesson. Here—hold these leashes a moment!"

He thrust the ends of the leashes into August Kunkel's hands before the banker could retreat. Then he whipped a checkbook out of his pocket and slapped it down on Mr. Kunkel's desk. He swooped up the pen from the banker's ornate desk set, scowled at the point, then flicked ink behind his back—on Mr. Kunkel's nice, wine-colored rug.

He filled in the date on the checkbook, then looked up. "Y'know what these local yokels tried to pull on my friend, Cragg? They thought he was stony and they faked up a few phony bills for dog-meat, a couple thousand altogether—the pikers!—then they come busting out to Cragg's place with a bunch of summonses and stuff, figuring if he couldn't pay they'd take away his place on him. They didn't even have brains enough to think up a good one. The house is only a small one, ten or twelve rooms, and the land's nothing at all. It's the dogs they're after—finest St. Bernards this side of the Alleghanies. I'll fix them, the farmers. Here's a little something I'm going to deposit here, for my friend to draw against, in case I can't stay with him long enough to see him through. Umm, five might not be enough. I'd better make it ten—thousand——"

He stooped and began writing again.

"A-beep-a-beep," blew the horn of the Cadillac right outside Mr. Kunkel's window.

Johnny wrote, "ten thousand dollars

and no cents," and then scowled at the pen again. He flicked ink over Mr. Kundel's rug once more, then stooped to affix his signature to the check, He wrote Johnathan L. . . .

And then the door of the office burst open and Archibald, the colored chauffeur, exclaimed, " 'Xcuse me, Mistuh Fletcher, but I just done seen Mrs. Van Piltzer of Newport driving by in her Rolls. I thought y'all would want to know and if I should chase after—"

"Old Mrs. Van Piltzer?" cried Johnny. "*Here* in Missouri? You must be mistaken, Archibald."

"Nossuh, suh, it was her all right. I rec'lect her license num'er—"

"Of course!" roared Johnny. "Of course! She told me she was going to drive through to the coast. I'd forgotten —here, Archie—bring the dogs, we'll catch her—" He leaped for the door, then as he was about to hurtle through, skidded to a stop.

"Oh, Mr. Bungel," he said, hold everything! I'll be back in ten minutes—"

THEN he went out. He bounced through the bank, rushed to the Cadillac and jumped in. It wasn't until Archie came up and began piling in the dogs, that Johnny realized Sam Cragg was not in the car.

"Damn," he swore. "Where's Cragg?"

"The gen'man who was with you? Dunno, he said he had a little bus'ness t'take care of."

"He would!" snarled Johnny. "Well, climb in and drive like hell—"

Archibald leaped into the car and started the motor. "Which way, Mistuh Fletcher?"

"Any way—after Mrs. Van Piltzer, or Pillzer. Get going—"

The Cadillac leaped away so suddenly Johnny was slammed back against the seat cushions. They were going fifty-five in second, when Johnny cried:

"All right, we're out of sight of the bank. Slow down—"

"Yas suh, Boss!" Then, "Did we'all rob that there bank?"

"What?" Johnny chuckled. "Oh, you mean the act. No, it was just a game."

"What 'bout the other gen'man? We goin' wait for him?"

"No. He'll find his way back to the farm. Serve him right if he had to walk. He had no business leaving the car. Home —Archie!"

Johnny Fletcher heard the dogs a half mile away. He looked at his dollar watch and saw that it was almost noon. Since they hadn't eaten that day, the dogs were pretty hungry.

In the yard Martin Faraday was surrounded by a half dozen St. Bernards, including Mohawk the Seventh. He greeted Johnny vociferously.

"Ha! Make them jealous, did you?"

Johnny grinned. "It worked swell. Fella who high-hatted me once came across the street to say hello. Thanks a lot, Mr. Faraday. Say, those dogs seem to go for you? Maybe you ought to take one or two along to keep Iroquois—I mean, Mohawk, company."

"Wish I could. Can't handle more'n one. Must be goin' now. Long way to drive. Come, Mohawk!"

Johnny waited only until Faraday had climbed into his car, before he started running for the house.

George Tompkins was sprawled on the couch in the living room. "What's going on around here, Fletcher?" he asked.

"Big things, Georgie. You wouldn't understand. Where's the local telephone directory?"

"By the telephone. Where would you expect to find it—in the doghouse?"

Johnny gave George a dirty look and headed for the telephone in the foyer. He found the thin directory and looked up the number of the First National Bank of Deming. He called it and asked for Kunkel, the president. When he got him he cried:

"Dunkel? Johnathan Fletcher talking.

Dammit, did I forget my checkbook in your place? Yes? Hold it. I'll have one of the men pick it up. Look, I'm tied up with Mrs. Van Piltzer. The old girl's going to stop over an hour or so. What? I didn't sign the check? Damme, too many things on m'mind. All right, I'll

have one of the men bring it back. I'm going to stick around a day or two and get Cragg straightened out with his bloomin' dogs. May see you again. If not—cheerio!"

He slammed the receiver on the hook, then picked up the directory again and turned to the yellow classified section. He found *Grocers,* and saw four were listed. He called the first, roaring into the phone:

"Is this the grocery store? Cragg Dog Farm. I want you to rush out five hundred pounds of your best hamburger right away. Dammit, I said five *hundred,* not five pounds. And throw in a few hundred pounds of bones, too. What—? Did I ask you for credit? Call up the First National Bank. They'll tell you the money's there. And rush that meat right out here or you'll get no more business from us. Understand? 'Bye!"

He hung up and repeated the conversation with the second grocer, then the third and fourth.

When he finally finished he took a handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his perspiring forehead.

"Fletcher," said George Tompkins, who had come out to the foyer, "if that works, I'll buy you a pair of copper-lined earmuffs."

"Speaking of work," Johnny said, grimly, "we're going to have a new deal around here—a no-work, no-eat deal. Catch on, Georgie?"

Georgie regarded him uneasily. "I've been working. Taking care of the business end of things."

"I'm running that end from now on. You're transferred to the Maintenance Division. In other words, you get out and help Binns clean the pens, or whatever he does, and you start right now."

George sneered but when Johnny moved toward him he turned and scampered out of the house.

Mrs. Binns came out of the kitchen. "What are we going to eat, Mr. Fletcher? There isn't a bite of food in the pantry."

"Call up the grocery, Mrs. Binns. Any grocery in Deming. Order what you need and have them bring it right out."

"Will they do it?"

"They will. I've opened charge accounts with all the grocers. Everything's fine, Mrs. Binns."

HE CHUCKLED and strolled out of the house. He stood for a moment on the front veranda surveying the impressive English style house of James Webb. It was a nice place; a lot of money had been put into the house and landscaping of the grounds.

But why should Webb be so vindictive toward his neighbors? His house was more than a hundred yards from the kennels across the road and about the only times the dogs could be heard were on those rare occasions when they all joined in concerted chorus.

He turned away to go around the house and inform Binns of the impending arrival of the dog food, when he saw a strange sight approaching from the direction of Deming.

It was nothing more than a farm truck, with high sideboards. The sideboards could not conceal the most decrepit nag Johnny had ever seen in his life.

Sam Cragg was in the seat beside the driver of the truck.

Johnny went to meet the truck. Sam saw him and swung to the ground.

"Look what I got, Johnny," he cried jubilantly.

"What is it?"

"Huh?" Sam looked disconcerted. "It's a horse. I bought it."

"Ohmigawd!" Johnny groaned.

Sam beamed. "I saw it in Deming. A man had it hitched to a wagon that it couldn't hardly pull. I thought, gee whiz, that's exactly what we need. We been paying twelve cents a pound for horse meat and this—this weighs fourteen hundred pounds and I got it for only twenty-two dollars!"

"Take it away," Johnny choked. "Take it away before I pick it up and hit you in the face with it."

"Johnny," exclaimed Sam. "What's the matter with you? We need it. Have you forgotten—?"

"Yes, I've forgotten. More than you'll ever know, Sam. For punishment I ought to let you keep that fugitive from a glue factory.

"I ought to make you grind him up into hamburger. But I'll take pity on you—I'll just let you take it back."

Sam gave Johnny a reproachful look, then turned to the driver of the truck. "Sorry, pal, but you see how it is. Take the nag back to that farmer I got him from. Tell him it's no sale."

"All right," said the driver. "I'll take the horse back. But you owe me three dollars for driving him here."

"I'll send you a check," Johnny said curtly.

"I don't want a check. I want my three bucks—and I want it now."

"How do you want it?" Sam asked savagely. "In the face, with my fists? Or would you rather wait for Johnny to send you a check?"

The truck driver looked at Sam's massive body, then muttered and started turning his truck. At is pulled away, Sam said sullenly to Johnny:

"I think you made a mistake, Johnny. Listen to those dogs. They're hungry—"

"Their food's on the way from town. I bought enough to last them two or three days."

"Huh? With what?"

Credit. Why do you suppose I went to the bank?"

"I don't know. I—I thought—"

"You thought I'd gone crazy. Yeah, I saw how you acted. Hell, haven't you been with me long enough to know that I never fail, when we're really up against it? I gave that hick banker such a razzle-dazzle that he never got in his life. He thinks I'm a multi-millionaire at least."

"But, Johnny, you didn't give him a rubber check? It'll catch up with you."

"Don't worry, Sammy boy. I'd never do anything that was illegal—if there's any chance of being caught. No, I didn't give him a rubber check. I started to write him out a check, but never got to finish it, although I admit for a second or two, it was damn close. Archibald took his time about interrupting me."

"I don't get it."

"Neither did Kunkel, the banker. I was going to give him a check for ten g's, for you to draw against. Only I never finished writing out the check."

"Then it's no good. I don't see what you gained by all the monkey shines."

"I gained the banker's confidence. You see, I had to rush out of the bank. In my hurry I forgot my checkbook—on Kunkel's desk. Do you think he had enough curiosity to look at the stubs?"

"Yeah, I get that. But you didn't have anything in the bank. You drew out the five hundred odd we had, before you left New York—"

"That's right, but if you'll remember I borrowed Archie's fountain pen in the car. All I did was write a 32 in front of the five hundred that was on the last stub."

Sam stared at Johnny in bewilderment.

"But if you didn't get any money, what good does it do to make the banker think you've got thirty-two thousand five hundred dollars in a New York bank?"

"Why," said Johnny, "I don't know. Not for sure. But Kunkel *thinks* I've got money. He *thinks* I'm going to sign that ten-thousand-dollar check. In the meantime, if anyone should happen to ask him about me, why, naturally, he's going to tell him what he *thinks,* that I'm a big multimillionaire from New York. He saw my car—what he thinks is my car—he saw my chauffeur, my sloppy clothes and big dogs—and he listened to my bull; is he going to tell a grocer who calls up and asks if I'm good for a lousy fifty dollars worth of hamburger that my credit's no good?"

"Lord!" breathed Sam.

"You said it. And if I'm not mistaken, there's a truck coming down the road there with the first load of hamburger. You might go and tell Mrs. Binns to get a shovelful of it for our lunch. If it's good enough for the dogs, it's good enough for us."

It *was* a grocer's truck, and it contained five hundred pounds of hamburger packed in wooden tubs. Before it had unloaded, a second truck had arrived.

"That's fine," Johnny said to Sam. "The driver of the first will tell his boss, that we're also buying meat from their competitor. That'll put them in competition to get our business, exclusively."

Binns came out of the kennels with tears in his eyes. "Oh, thank you, Mr. Fletcher," he said. "The dogs were so hungry—"

"S'all right, Binns. Let them have their fill. There's a ton of the stuff and enough bones to fill a graveyard. I don't believe in stinting growing animals on their food." As an after-thought, "Although if these dogs grow any bigger I'll sell them to a circus for Australian elephants."

When the third truck came, Johnny saw Susan Webb, in tan slacks and bright red sweater and armed with a pair of pruning shears, working at a row of flowers that bordered the front of the Webb estate.

He strolled to the wire fence and leaning against the top of it, called across the road, "Hi, neighbor!"

She looked up, then stooped over a rose bush. "How'd you do it?"

"Do what?"

"You know what I mean. Father thought he had you frozen out."

"Best thing to melt ice is hot air," said Johnny, chuckling. "And tell your father I don't like him. I don't mind his fighting me, but those dogs have to eat, no matter what happens."

"I know. I thought it was horrid of him to stop your getting supplies. But he seemed to think it was the best way to stop you."

"From what? From breathing the same Missouri air that he's using? I haven't done him any harm."

She straightened for a moment. "Surely you're not still pretending not to know what it's all about?"

Johnny scowled. "He wants to be rid of the dogs over here."

She stooped over a bush again and Johnny saw her shaking her head.

"Well, what is it, then?"

"Ask your friend, Sam Cragg."

"Cut it out," Johnny growled. "Sam's the best friend I've got in the world. But if he knows more than I do, about *anything,* he's been fooling me for fifteen years. Come on, spill it—what's it all about?"

"Be at the Calico Cat tonight at ten," she said, then straightened and walked swiftly toward her house. Johnny, staring after her, saw a flash of white flannels in a front window and after pretending to examine the wire fence a moment sauntered back toward the house.

When he got inside, Georgie Tompkins was again parked on the couch. A cigarette dangled from his slack lips and he was breathing heavily.

Johnny moved swiftly across the thick

rug and, reaching down, dumped George to the floor. The boy bleated and began swearing at Johnny.

"What'd I tell you about working?" Johnny snarled.

"I came in for lunch," George howled. "Or, don't I get time off to eat around here?"

"Has either Binns or Sam come in?" Johnny retorted.

"No, but *you* have. You talk about everybody else working around here, but when do *you* start?"

"I'm working now," Johnny said coolly. "I'm the boss around here and I do the executive work."

"You're the boss, like hell! Cragg inherited this dump. If he's fool enough to let you take it away from him, all right, but I don't have to stick around here. I'm getting out of here."

"When?"

George's nostrils flared, but he swallowed hard. "As soon as I get some dough. You know I haven't got a dime and you're taking advantage of that."

Johnny reached into his pocket and pulled out a quarter. He tossed it on the floor, at Georgie's feet. "There's a quarter. I've had less than that a lot of times."

Georgie started to stoop for the quarter, then straightened without it and walked out of the room. Johnny picked up the piece of silver and dropped it into his pocket.

The front door bell rang. He went to answer it and when he opened the door a man thrust a piece of folded paper at him.

"A little present for you, Mister."

Johnny looked at it, saw the word "Summons," and ripping the piece of paper in half threw the sections in the man's face.

"I'm not Cragg. Go back and get another summons and serve it on the right person." He slammed the door in the process server's face.

He returned to the living room and took possession of the couch from which he had forcibly vacated Georgie Tompkins a few minutes ago. He was just dozing off when Mrs. Binns came in to tell him that lunch was ready.

He ate four hamburger patties, while Sam Cragg stowed away seven. Georgie Tompkins did not show up for lunch.

"Where's the kid?" Sam asked.

"In the doghouse. I told him no work, no eat. He didn't work."

"Serves him right. You know, I been thinkin', Johnny. This dog business might not be so bad after all. Take that fella, Faraday, he was willing to go five hundred for a mutt. Why don't we try running an ad in the newspapers? I bet we'd sell a lot of dogs that way. We might not get five hundred for every one of them, but two or three hundred would be fine, too."

"It certainly would, Sam, but isn't it strange no one else ever thought of that stunt?"

"Huh? You mean they did?"

Johnny called to the kitchen, "Binns! Can you come here a moment?" Then when Binns ambled into the dining room, "Binns how much advertising did Julius Cragg do?"

"Quite a lot, Mr. Fletcher. He ran half pages in all the dog magazines and in one of them he kept a full page running the year around. The advertising wasn't profitable, of course."

"Why not?"

"Because there isn't a large demand for St. Bernards. Not at the prices we had to ask for them. Mr. Cragg mostly just sold the extras, what you might call the runts and the culls. He'd get fifty to seventy-five dollars for them. We didn't sell a half dozen really good dogs in a year."

Sam frowned. "Then, if he couldn't sell them, what was the idea of raising them?"

"I never asked Mr. Cragg that," Binns said. "He seemed to like the dogs, I guess."

"All right, Binns," Johnny said. When the dog breeder had left the room, he shook his head.

"I had a hunch about that, Sam. Dogs were a hobby with your Uncle Julius."

"If you ask me, my uncle was nuts."

"Maybe he was at that. But—I don't think so. Your uncle had other irons in the fire. Or have you forgotten Pete Suratt and the Pendletons so quickly? And Mr. Webb, who lives across the road."

Sam winced. "Johnny, you're not going to—play detective again?"

"I'm going to find out some things. I didn't have time this morning, because I had to solve the food problem for the dogs. But that's taken care of now and—"

Sam groaned. "What do I do, take on the whole Pendleton family?"

"You were willing enough to this morning. In fact, you felt pretty good about slugging young Andy Pendleton."

"You want me to slug the bullets Pete Suratt'll toss at me with that heater of his?"

"I was just thinking about Pete. He's got a one-track mind. Seems to think he ought to collect thirty-two thousand from someone, or else."

Sam got up from the table. "Look Johnny, he was *my* uncle. I'm not the least bit curious about who killed him."

"I am, though, Sammy, and if you'll be a good boy and get out the station wagon, we'll go and see somebody."

"The Pendleton gang?"

"No, Pots. I want to ask him how come he forgot to tell you about the Pendletons and Mr. Suratt; and Mr. Webb."

"He did tell us about Webb."

"He told us a lie. I have no objection to a man telling a lie if he's got a reason, but as far's I can see at this moment Potts had no reason to lie. So, let's go see him, huh?"

Sam got out the station wagon, but Johnny made him move over and took the wheel himself. Sam's driving was subject to criticism; he had a mistaken idea that other cars should always get out of his way.

He was a roadhog, just as he was a sidewalk hog.

X

JOHNNY zoomed the car down Manchester Road, to Big Bend, then turned left to Olive Street and right again to Forest Park and over the new express highway to Grand Avenue. He drove the car into a ten-cent parking lot and then he and Sam walked a block to the building in which were located the offices of Riley, Ryan, Riordan and Potts.

It was a few minutes after one when they entered the luxuriously furnished reception room. A luscious blonde regarded them coolly from behind a crescent-shaped, modernistic desk.

"I wanted to see a lawyer," Johnny said flippantly, "but let it pass now. You'll do, instead."

"I've got a boy friend," the blonde retorted. "He's heavyweight champ of Webster Groves. What's your trouble? Criminal? Then you'll want Mr. Ryan. Domestic, Mr. Riley—"

"Skullduggery, Mr. Potts. Tell him it's his Nemesis. Johnny Fletcher to you, baby."

The blonde touched a telephone, then passed over it and flicked the switch of an inter-office communication system.

"A Mr. Fletcher to see you."

A metallic voice replied, "Tell him I'm busy or something."

"Ha-ha," laughed Johnny. He strode

to a door, on which was lettered in gold, "Mr. Potts," and pushed it open.

Gerald Potts, hiding behind a *Racing Form,* said, "Did you get rid of him, Miss Abbott?"

"No," said Johnny, and chuckled as the lawyer dropped the *Racing Form.* "I got in through the door," Johnny added brightly. "Sam—you remember Sam Cragg, don't you? Sam wanted to ask you a couple of questions about his estate. Go ahead, Sam."

"Huh?"

"About Suratt, Sam. You were going to ask him what he knew about Pete."

Gerald Potts regarded Johnny coldly. "I know nothing about Pete Suratt. Except what I've read in the papers. He's a notorious gambler."

"What paper did you read that in, Potts? The *Missouri Methodist Monthly* —that you just dropped?"

Potts' nose wrinkled distastefully. "I'm not the executor of Cragg's estate. He is, himself. I've done my duty in locating him and turning things over. The rest is up to him. It's a small estate and I obtained only a nominal fee for my services."

"Who paid you?"

"I haven't been paid yet. The court will give me a check—in due course of time."

"Suppose we—Sam, I mean—wanted to retain you as his attorney, Mr. Potts?"

"What for? All he needs is a good realtor, who might be able to sell the farm for a little over the mortgage. He doesn't need an attorney."

"That's where you're wrong, Mr. Potts. Sam does need an attorney. He wants to sue—Andrew Pendleton."

Mr. Potts' eyes glowed. "What for?"

"To recover a sum of money Julius Cragg foolishly loaned Pendleton."

"Pendleton repaid that loan. Whoever told you he didn't is misinformed."

"Then we've been misinformed. But just for the fun of it, when did Pendleton repay the money?"

"I wouldn't know that."

"Then how do you know it was paid back?"

Potts showed his teeth. "What are you getting at, Fletcher?"

"A pile of cheese, Potts. It reeks. The whole Cragg setup smells. Just a little while ago, Julius Cragg, a successful bookie, had enough money to loan a big hunk to a slot machine manufacturer. He could afford to spend a hundred dollars a day to feed a bunch of dogs. Then he's killed and there isn't a dime lying around loose. What became of Cragg's dough?"

Potts sneered. "I wasn't his business manager, merely his attorney. You say he was a bookmaker—mind you, *you* say that —all right, if he was, maybe he took a beating."

"Maybe he did, apparently he didn't pay off big losses. Pete Suratt claims that he didn't. What did he do with the money then?"

"Perhaps he fed it to the dogs."

Johnny regarded Gerald Potts steadily for a moment, then shrugged. "Okay, Potts, I can't make you talk."

"No," said Mr. Potts.

In the anteroom, Johnny paused to talk to the blond receptionist. "Do you like working for that sourpuss, Potts?"

"Yes," she replied crisply. "I like working for him. I particularly like it on Friday afternoon when he gives me a check for fifty dollars."

"Fifty bucks a week?"

"Well, maybe it's only fifteen. But it's awfully nice money. My landlady simply loves it. Good-by, Mr. Fletcher."

"Not good-by, just so long. By the way, what'll I call you when I telephone?"

"I don't accept personal telephone calls at the office."

Johnny grinned and moved to the door. Before he could open it, the blonde said, "The name's Yvonne, short for Iva."

Waiting for the elevator, Sam said, "You know, Johnny, I don't think I like that guy Potts."

"I don't like him, too. How would you like to go out to the racetrack?"

Sam brightened, but slumped immediately. "With what?"

"With two dollars and seventy-five cents. A fella'd be a fool to go to the races with a roll, wouldn't he? He might lose it. On the other hand, if we go there without any money, anything we pick up is velvet."

SAM didn't remark on that until they had gone down in the elevator and were walking toward the parking lot where they had left the station wagon. Then he said, "You've got to have *some* money to make a bet."

"Who said anything about betting? That's gambling and you know that I never gamble."

"Cut it out, Johnny. You're acting screwier'n hell, today, and I don't like it."

"All right, then, don't ask so many questions. There's the car. We'll have to hurry to get to the track in time for the second race. The track's over in Illinois, you know."

They got the car and drove downtown to the free bridge over which they crossed to East St. Louis. Johnny gave the car all she had once they were outside the city limits and in a few minutes he saw the big racetrack ahead.

He paid the parking fee and they walked to the gates.

Then he chuckled. "Two-twenty admission for the two of us. That'll get us into the track with a bankroll of exactly thirty-five cents. You can't go very wrong with that much, can you, Sam?"

"Where's the fun in watching horses run if you can't put a bet on them?" Sam asked in disgust. "I'd just as soon spend the two-twenty on beer."

"We're going to do a little drinking tonight, Sam—if we're lucky."

He bought two grandstand tickets and they entered the park. It was a good day and the track was well patronized. The results of the first race were just being posted.

"Hmm," said Johnny, "Ruskin won at $13.20. Not bad. Well, you've got to have a program. No, we need a program apiece. Here—"

The programs cost fifteen cents a piece. Johnny handed one to Sam and opened his own to the entries for the second race.

"Well, well," he remarked. "Here's a horse looks good, Don Miguel."

"A goat," sniffed Sam. "He's a fifteen to one."

"That's what I like about him. It's only a five-horse race, so he's got one chance in five of winning."

"That's a heluva way to figure a horse race," Sam snorted. "There are four *good* horses in this race, with odds from three-to-two to four-to-one. Don Miguel hasn't got a chance."

"That may be, Sammy. You're an expert on the nags. You've certainly lost plenty on them, in your time. So here's the way we do it; first of all, you need a cigar."

"What for? I don't like cigars—"

"You need a cigar, to look the part. Here—" He stepped to a stand and said: "I want the best nickel stogie you've got."

The clerk pulled out a box of black, crooked cigars. Johnny took one and paid out his last nickel. He thrust the cigar at Sam. "Light it up, Sammy. Then you walk back and forth, studying your program until I give you the sign—don't notice me until I give you the wink—"

"Hey!" cried Sam, "you can't do that!"

"What, Sam?"

"Touting. They'll throw you off the grounds."

"Maybe yes, maybe no, but I'm going to give it a shot."

Sam's nostrils flared. "All right, we'll get home early, then. What's the horse, Don Miguel?"

"Yes. Light up the stogie and start walking. There's a lad over there seems

to be having a hard time deciding on a horse. I'll go give him a boost."

He strolled away from Sam and sauntered over beside a man in a gray suit, who was studying his program. Johnny took out his own pencil and began making checks opposite the horses' names. After a moment, he began muttering, "Gee, this is a tough race."

The man beside him said, "I beg your pardon?"

"I said it's a tough race to pick. What do you think of Miss Suzy?"

"She's the favorite at three to two."

Johnny made a wry face. "Hardly worth betting on, even if she wins. I wish Cragg would show up. He usually gives me my horses."

The man in the gray suit did not take up the bait, so Johnny went on, "You've heard of Cragg, haven't you? Cragg, the big betting commissioner?"

"Cragg? Uh, yeah, sure."

"It isn't often a man like him misses." Johnny chuckled. "Be funny if he did, with his inside dope."

"That's the hell of this racket," the man in the gray suit said, "a few of these fellows rig up a race and the suckers like us have to guess. Well, I'll bite once more. Whiplash at three to one—"

"Whiplash? Umm, I don't think so. I kind of like—— Gee, there he is—Cragg, the commissioner. Oh, Mr. Cragg!"

SAM, his teeth clamped over the black stogie, looked frostily at Johnny. "Hello, Fletcher," he said, with just the proper amount of distaste.

"I'm having a little trouble with this next race, Mr. Cragg," Johnny said deferentially. "What do you think of Whiplash?"

"That dog? He couldn't—" Sam leaned forward suddenly and said, "This stogie's making me sick."

Johnny beamed. "Oh, thank you, Mr. Cragg. Thank you."

Sam grunted and moved away. The man beside Johnny stirred uneasily. Johnny said joyfully, "Oh boy, oh boy!"

"He gave you a tip?" The man in the gray suit asked. "You wouldn't — you wouldn't tell a fellow, would you?"

"Tell? Oh, no. Cragg wouldn't like that. It gets out, the odds go down. He's probably got a couple of thousand on this horse himself. I don't blame him, on *this* horse."

The other man groaned. "That's the hell of this racket. A sucker like me."

Johnny caught his arm. "Look, I'm going to take a chance. I like you. Fifty bucks won't drive the odds down too far, especially since I—damn the luck—since I came out today with hardly any money on me."

"Fifty is pretty steep for me," the sucker said, "I was figuring on about ten."

Johnny dug his fingers into the other's arm. "Ten bucks on this horse? Cripes—it's Don Miguel—at fifteen to one!"

The man's eyes popped. "Don Miguel? Holy smokes—ten bucks would bring a hundred and fifty."

"And twenty would bring three hundred. Go ahead, sink it on. I'll meet you here after the race. Okay?"

The sucker hesitated. "Okay, if Don Miguel wins—I'll slip you a piece of him".

"Swell. He'll win all right. Cragg almost never picks them wrong. Ha-ha!"

Johnny watched the sucker depart, then moved away about fifty feet and selected another victim. After his act with Sam, he reluctantly passed on the information that Miss Suzy, even though she was only a three-to-two bet was going to win the race by eight lengths.

Ten minutes later, the horses went to the post and Johnny picked up Sam. "The trouble with this business," Johnny complained, "is that there isn't enough time between the races to tout *all* the horses. I couldn't get Copper Monkey and Red Devil."

"And one of them'll win," Sam said darkly, "which means that you'll probably

get a poke in the nose, or two, from the suckers you touted those other goats to."

"Not if I see them first, Sam. You look kind of sick—"

"That lousy stogie—"

"They're off!" screamed the crowd.

Don Migued took the lead. At the first turn he was two lengths in front of the other horses and was still going strong. Sam said disgustedly, "I told you that Don Miguel was a goat."

"Goat? Whaddya mean? Look at him run; he's three lengths ahead now."

"So what? He'll fold in the back. The leaders always do."

In the back-stretch, Don Miguel was five lengths ahead of the field. At the far turn he was six and Sam began breathing hoarsely. The five horses headed into the home-stretch.

"Come on, Don Miguel!" Johnny roared. "Come on, horse!"

"Come on, Red Devil—Copper Monkey!" hundreds of throats screamed.

Johnny held his breath. Numbers 3 and 5 were coming up behind Don Miguel. They were closing the distance with every hoofbeat. Don Miguel was falling back rapidly. He had set too fast a pace. He had—

"Come on, Don Miguel!" Johnny screamed frantically.

Don Miguel, a horse on either side of him, already nosed past his withers, seemed suddenly to flatten. There was space between him and the others and then —then he was across, the winner!

"Ohmigawd!" cried Johnny. "And I picked him."

"Now find the sucker," Sam said excitedly. "What'd he look like?"

"I don't know. He had a gray suit. He was going to meet me over there by the post."

"Well, get over there then, Johnny. They'll be paying off and you don't want to miss him."

Johnny went over to the post and then hopped about for five minutes. Sam stood nearby, watching anxiously. He finally came over. "It's no use, Johnny. There's too many people here. You'll never find him."

"There you are!" said a cold voice. "And with your stooge, too."

Johnny whirled. A beefy, angry-faced man bore down on him. Johnny backed away. "Uh, too bad, wasn't it?"

"Too bad for you. You touted the wrong horse. You and your pal, Mister Betting Commissioner. Officer—"

The rush of wind was Johnny and Sam departing.

They were within twenty feet of the exit gate, when Johnny put on an extra burst of speed and catching up to a man in a gray suit, cried:

"Hey, partner! Aren't you forgetting something?"

The man turned and winced. "Uh, do I know you?"

"Damn right you do," Johnny snapped. "I gave you Don Miguel didn't I?"

Sam Cragg trotted up and scowled at the man in the gray suit. The latter fidgeted. "That's right, but uh—I didn't want to take a chance. I, uh, only put five dollars on him."

"Five?" howled Johnny. "You were putting ten on for *me,* that's a hundred and fifty. You were trying to duck out, too—weren't you?"

"Come on, Johnny," whispered Sam, "The Eye's coming."

"Give me twenty-five bucks," Johnny said quickly. "And we'll call it square."

"Okay, Mister," said the sucker. "Here it it."

"Joe, stop those two touts!" boomed a voice.

JOHNNY snatched the money from the sucker and thrust it into his pocket. He pivoted away from the gate and a beefy hand caught his shoulder.

"Touting, eh?" snarled the Eye.

"I beg your pardon?" said Johnny, haughtily.

The Eye—race track detective—shook Johnny roughly. "Don't gimme any of that saw you myself. And this big lug—"

Johnny suddenly grinned. "Why, Mr. Pinkerton, this is Sam Cragg, the nephew of old Julius Cragg."

A bitter look came into the detective's eyes. "It ain't true! I don't deserve this."

"Ha!" cried Johnny. "A pal of your uncle's, Sammy."

"Pal?" winced the detective. "Me, a pal of Julius Cragg? The happiest day of my life was when they played the slow, soft music for Julius and he couldn't hear it. And now—his nephew's come to take on, where he left off."

Johnny eased his shoulder out from the detective's relaxed grip. "Well, now, Billy, maybe we can talk this over. How about a beer?"

"Can't. I'm on duty. Besides, I want nothing to do with any Cragg. It ain't healthy."

"That," said Johnny, "is what I'd like to talk about."

"With me? Uh-uh. I don't know a thing about it. What happened between Julius and—and those men, is none of my business. I'm a race track cop, that's all. Outside this gate, they can do anything they like and I wouldn't bat an eye."

"But Pete Suratt bet with him, inside the track—"

The Eye frowned uneasily. "I don't know anything about Pete Suratt. But if I was Cragg's nephew, I'd keep out of Suratt's way. He's a handy lad with shooting irons."

Johnny smiled winningly. "Now, look, Billy, you seem to be a decent sort. What would you say if I told you that Sam and me are not horseplayers at all?"

"After I caught you touting? That reminds me—"

"We weren't touting," Johnny said hastily. "The fella owed me some money. He got on a good horse and I grabbed him for the dough he owed me. That's all. But look, Sam's just come west. No matter what *you* think of Julius, he was Sam's uncle and Sam was fond of him. Mighty fond. The old boy was good to Sam. Yes—" He frowned at Sam who was muttering under his breath. "Yes, Old Julius even left Sam his estate. A lovely farm over in Missouri, a nice bundle of stocks —and bonds—" Johnny glanced sharply at the detective. "You knew that Julius was pretty well heeled?"

The Eye nodded. "He ought to been. He practically owned this joint. I mean, there's a Jocky Club and some stockholders, but just the same, Cragg made book for all of them and you know how that is."

"I don't. But I get the general idea. Cragg was a big shot. Rated pretty high, eh? Modest boy, never bragged to his nephew."

The detective sniffed. "You mean, when he was asleep. In the old days they called him Jawing Julius. Never saw a guy who liked himself so well."

"You're pretty stuck on yourself, copper," Sam cut in.

The detective grinned. "Your uncle tried to get me kicked out only the week before he was knocked off. He may have been the apple of your eye, but to me he was only a cinder."

"You say that about my uncle," Sam said truculently, "and I may forget you're a fly-cop and pop you two or three."

"You and who else? I blow this whistle—"

"We were just going," Johnny exclaimed. "Thanks, pal. Come on, Sam—" He grabbed his friend's arm and jerked him through the turnstile.

XI

AS THEY were walking through the parking field, Johnny chuckled, "I told you the way to go to a race track was without money. We picked up twenty-five dollars."

Sam shuddered. "It's only a miracle

that we're walking away from here, without handcuffs on our mitts."

"How often have you worn handcuffs, Sam?"

"Too many times. Remember that crummy jail in Minnesota? And the one in Iowa—and I mustn't forget the bull pen in New York."

"All right, all right, forget it. I always got you out, didn't I? We made twenty-five cocoanuts in just a few minutes and I got some information about your uncle."

"What? I didn't hear anything."

"That's because you were listening only with your ears. I verified something that I've been suspecting all day, that Uncle Julius was a successful bookie. He made a pile of dough. But where is it?"

"They found the station wagon and then climbed in. It wasn't until they were on the highway heading back toward St. Louis that Sam Cragg muttered, "You s'pose there was dough and that lawyer glommed on to it?"

"I don't know who got it, but I'm convinced your uncle left a flock of kopeks. Our job is to find them."

"Well," Sam conceded, "I wouldn't mind finding it. So far my inheritance has been pretty much of a bust, but if there's going to be a bundle of the long green around somewhere, I'm for it."

"So am I. Let's run over the setup. Your uncle was knocked off by someone who plugged him three times in front of his house, then beat it in a car. Your uncle didn't leave a will, but as next of kin you're elected, thereby disappointing young Georgie Tompkins no end. A smart lad, that Georgie."

"Too smart for his health."

"Agreed. Continuing with Georgie we find that he's got a crush on Susan Webb, the gal across the road, whose old man had a mad on your uncle and is continuing the mad against you to the extent that he's put pressure on the Quadlands to sell you out of home and dog business."

"If he wants to get rid of me so bad, why doesn't he make me an offer? I'm willing to listen."

"Listen then. This brings us up to Pete Suratt, fresh from Hell's Kitchen, who says your uncle welshed on a thirty-two thousand payoff. Maybe yes, maybe no, but Pete's a problem. And so are the Pendletons who are too damn eager to convince us that they didn't owe your uncle any mazuma. Their yarn is backed up by none other than that high-class shyster who started the daisy chain by digging you up in the first place."

"Yeah," said Sam, "you'd think he'd have saved himself some trouble by not looking for me in the first place."

"I thought of that, Sam. I haven't forgotten something else—that Lawyer Potts showed up mighty strange last night, fetching along Miss Webb, with whom yours truly has a date tonight."

"A date? Dammit, Johnny, you promised me you wouldn't start anything with a dame."

"I made no such promise, Sam. Susan is a nice dish; she's wasting herself on a squirt who isn't dry behind the ears yet. Miss Webb ought to go out with older men—fellows about thirty-five."

"Good-by, twenty-five bucks," Sam muttered.

"Cigarette money, Sammy. In a day or two we'll be rolling in wealth."

IT WAS shortly after five when they returned to the dog farm. Georgie Tompkins was back on the couch in the living room, but he sprang to his feet when Johnny and Sam entered.

"I guess I'll have to burn that couch," Johnny said.

"You'll probably be burned yourself," Georgie retorted. "Your pals were here looking for you this afternoon."

"The Pendletons?"

"Three or four of them. And they were loaded for bear. So was Pete Suratt who came right after they left. He's coming back this evening."

"He must like the country air. Sam, I think we better turn fifteen or twenty dogs out into the yard, just to keep unwelcome visitors away from the house."

Georgie chuckled wickedly. "And I mustn't forget your friend, the banker."

"Henry Quadland?"

"*He* sent a process server. I mean Kunkel. He's been telephoning every ten minutes. There she goes again."

Johnny turned and scowled in the general direction of the foyer. "Answer it, Sam. Tell him I'm having tea with Mrs.—Van Pitcher. No, wait a minute. You can't talk to him, either. Georgie, you answer it."

Georgie snickered. "Nix. You get yourself out of your own jams."

"I'll let you smoke a cigarette, Georgie," Johnny coaxed.

"Shoot your own crows."

Johnny flexed his hands, resisting the impulse to put them about Georgie's thin neck.

In the meantime, Mrs. Binns came out of the kitchen and answered the phone. Johnny listened to her. "Mr. Fletcher? I'll see if he's here."

She came to the living room door. "Mr. Fletcher, there's—"

"It's that banker again," Johnny interrupted. "He's trying to sell me some bonds. He's a hard man to refuse. Uh, you better tell him I'm out, Mrs. Binns."

"Very well, Mr. Fletcher." She returned to the phone.

Georgie sneered at Johnny. "Getting an old woman to do your dirty work—"

Sam made growling noises deep in his throat and Georgie departed suddenly. Mrs. Binns came back. "It was Mr. Kunkel. He says he has to lock up, but he's sending your check book out and if you'd finish signing that check, he'll go back tonight and see that it's deposited for you."

"Thanks, Mrs. Binns. That's very nice of Mr. Kunkel—keeping the bank open evenings for me."

When she returned to the kitchen, Sam said anxiously, "There's going to be some trouble about that check, Johnny. I can just feel it."

"I can't. I didn't *give* him the check."

"Yeah, but you used him to get credit at the butcher shops."

"No, I didn't. I just told them to ask at the bank if my credit was good. I didn't tell them it *was*. I left it all up to Kunkel. He could have told them my credit was no good."

Sam waved impatiently at Johnny. "Okay, you can always make something sound right. When do we eat?"

"Any minute, I guess. It smells like hamburger again." Johnny wrinkled up his nose. "I'll be turning into a dog if we keep on eating dog meat."

AFTER a few minutes Binns came in. "We got a very fine inquiry this afternoon, from the advertising. Man in Saskatchewan wants to start a breeding farm and asked for a price on three dogs and six bitches."

"How much does he want to pay?" Sam exclaimed.

"Why, he offered a hundred straight, but I think we can get him up to a hundred and fifty apiece—"

"Don't write him," Johnny cried, "telegraph him. No— that's too slow. I'll telephone him. What's his name and address?"

Binns took a letter from his pocket. "The name is William J. Foley. He lives in Regina—"

Johnny took the letter from Binns and strode to the telephone. "Give me long distance," he barked into the mouthpiece. "I want to get William J. Foley of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. That's right. The number here is Deming 2699. What—"

He winced. "All right, if that's the way you feel about it!" He slammed the receiver on the hook and strode back to the living room. "Send him an airmail letter, Binns. No use making the telephone company rich, the so-and-so's—"

Sam looked sharply at Johnny. "What's the matter?"

Johnny grinned crookedly. "Our phone service gets shut off tomorrow unless we pay the bill—a measly twenty-four bucks."

Sam groaned. "That, too!"

"That, too. But it's a blessing in disguise. The creditors won't be able to call us up."

The doorbell rang and Johnny hastened to the front door. He opened it and a sallow youth in his early twenties stuck a checkbook into Johnny's hand. "Mr. Kunkel sent me out with this. You forgot it at the bank—"

"Quite so, thanks, old man." He closed the door in the youth's face. The doorbell rang again, instantly. Johnny strode into the living room.

"Sam, go to the door and tell the boy outside I'm in the middle of a conference with some politicians and I'll take care of his boss' little matter tomorrow."

Sam started to protest, but seeing the scowl on Johnny's face went to the front door. Johnny heard him arguing for a minute or two, then Sam returned.

"The kid's suspicious, if you ask me."

"Let him be. Ah, there's supper!"

XII

AFTER dinner Johnny and Sam adjourned to their room on the second floor. Johnny laid out his other suit and repaired to the bathroom to shave.

Sam watched him gloomily. "You're going in for this in a big way, Johnny."

"I'll ask her if she's got a friend—for you. Will that make you feel better?"

"No. Not this time. I don't like the setup. Too many people ringing our doorbell. I don't feel right about it. I feel like something's about to explode in our faces."

"Not tonight, Sammy. Tomorrow maybe, but not tonight! Jump into your Sunday suit and we'll have some beer and fun."

Sam brightened a little, but when he got out the station wagon a little later he was glum again. Johnny took the wheel and drove to a filling station in Deming. He bought two gallons of gas and asked the way to the Calico Cat.

"It's down here on Manchester Road," the attendant told him. "You can't miss it. It's got a big blue neon cat sign. It isn't a bad place, if you don't mind Mickey Finns."

"Mickey Finns?" Sam exclaimed. "It's that kind of a joint?"

"Well, maybe it ain't, but I took my girl there once and the bill was eight dollars. Maybe they didn't slip a Mickey Finn in my drinks, but they robbed me just the same."

"Don't tell anyone," said Johnny, "but I'm a robber myself." He drove out of the station.

As the filling station man had told them the Calico Cat was an easy place to find, even though it was set back from the road a hundred yards or so. It was quite well patronized if the number of parked cars was any indication.

JOHNNY turned the station wagon over to an attendant, but watched to see where it was parked. He liked to know such things. Sometimes you had to make a quick getaway.

They walked toward the Calico Cat. Johnny, giving the huge building the once over, decided it was nothing more than a big barn with a couple of wings added. And a lot of paint and neon tubing.

A doorman let them in. There was a penny scale, a candy vendor and a handkerchief machine in the tiny foyer. They passed into a short hall and a girl snatched their hats from them. There was a pinball game beside the checkroom.

There were three pinball games just inside the huge dining room that constituted the main part of the Calico Cat. There was a dance floor in the center of the room, a midget dance floor considering the num-

ber of tables. Along one side was a bar, with high leather-covered stools in front of it. Beyond the bar was a raised orchestra platform on which a colored orchestra of half dozen musicians were fiddling with their instruments.

There were at least fifty tables in the Calico Cat and but two were occupied. A man and a girl were the only customers at the bar.

"Looks like we're a little early," Johnny remarked.

"We're practically opening the joint. How about a beer at the bar, to limber up?"

Sam tugged at his friend's sleeve. "Whizbangos, Johnny!" he whispered excitedly.

"I can read," Johnny retorted. "Two beers, please."

The bartender brought them two tall thin glasses of amber fluid. Sam opened his mouth, gulped twice and set the empty glass on the bar.

"Hell, what small beers," he complained.

The bartender put five nickels and a quarter on the bar, as change from the dollar Johnny had given him. Johnny scowled as he counted the money.

"That's the smallest nickel beer that I ever paid a quarter for," he said sourly.

"Gimme those nickels," Sam said. "Maybe I can win the next beers."

"They're for amusement only," Johnny said, "the sign on them says so."

"Nuts. That's for the law. There's a box on the bottom. If you win, you press a button and it opens the box. Lemme show you."

Reluctantly, Johnny handed Sam a nickel then followed him to the pinball games. Sam shoved a nickel in the slot and a series of lights lit up the board.

Sam explained the game. "You shoot out five steel balls, one at a time. Every time a ball bumps one of those springs it registers. Damn these crooks, they've got the score up to 16,000 for two points. It's usually 12,000, which ain't so hard to beat."

"The scoreboard registers up to 50,000."

Sam snickered. "No one ever made that score. Thirty thousand pays forty nickels."

"Forty points, it says. And fifty thousand—" Johnny whistled. "Five hundred points! That's twenty-five dollars. Do these things pay off that kind of dough?"

"If you're lucky, but I never heard of but one guy who was that lucky. He died from the shock. Here I go."

He worked a steel ball into the slot, then pulled back the plunger and let it slam out the ball.

Johnny watched intently. The ball bounced back and forth between a couple of feather springs, then slipped through a slot, that sent up a flicker of lights and registered a thousand points on the scoreboard.

After it passed through the slot the ball touched a coiled spring a couple of times, then ricocheted lazily toward the center. Sam, grasping the edges of the machine, nudged it gently.

The ball touched the spring, flashed a red light and registered a thousand points. Sam nudged again and again. The ball rang up six thousand points on the one spring before it finally rolled on to another. When it came to rest in the "out" slot at the bottom of the machine, the score indicator showed 8400 points.

"Cripes," said Johnny, "how long has this been going on?"

"For years," Sam chuckled. "There's *some* things I'm good at. Beatin' these games is one of them."

"But that body English you give it, Sam," Johnny cautioned, "go easy or it'll jar the machine and tilt it. That kills the score, doesn't it?"

"Yah, but I know just how hard to jiggle it. Watch—"

He sent out the second ball, but was able to touch the red thousand spring but twice this time. The rest of the "bumps"

however, brought the total up to an even 11,000.

"Only five thousand more with three balls and you collect," Johnny said excitedly.

"A cinch with that start on two balls."

The third ball brought the total up to 15,800. "Easy now, Sam," Johnny whispered. "Don't tilt it and ruin the score. You can't miss."

Sam chuckled and sent out the Number 4 ball. It went through the top thousand slot and by dexterous nudging Sam brought it squarely atop the center thousand spring. Lights flickered, the scoreboard registered and before the ball finally found its resting place at the bottom, the score was 28,500.

"This is better'n working!" Johnny cried, "but for Cripes' sake, don't tilt the machine *this* time. I'll get heart failure if you do."

Sam grinned wickedly. "If it tilts this time I'll break the machine."

It didn't tilt, but that was because Sam forbore to give it the "body English." As a result, the total score was a bare 30,800.

"Two bucks I win!" Sam exclaimed. He reached to the bottom of the machine and pressed a button. A little door flew open ad Sam reached in with his big fist. He brought it out full of coins—and cried out in consternation.

"Slugs!"

Johnny swore and snatched one of the slugs from Sam's hand. It was about the size of a nickel, but was made of lead. Stamped on it was the legend, *"For Amusement Only."*

"They can't do this," Sam gritted. He strode to the bar and called a bartender.

"Hey, Mike, pay me!"

The bartender looked steadily at Sam. "Pay you for what?"

"For these slugs. There's two dollars' worth of them. I won them in that machine—"

"Thirty thousand? That's a good score. You read the sign on the machine, *For Amusement Only,* didn't you?"

"I did," Sam said, "but everyone knows that doesn't mean anything."

"Oh, you don't believe in signs, huh? That's too bad, Mister, because those signs mean just what they say."

"The hell they do!" Sam howled. "You gimme my dough or I'll wreck this joint, d'you hear me."

"He means it, pal," Johnny said firmly.

THE bartender yawned. "Oh, does he? He reached down below the bar and came up with a baseball bat—a large one. "Wreck ahead, Mister!"

"Don't!" said a voice behind Johnny.

"Oh, let 'em," said another.

Johnny whirled and looked at Susan Webb in a red velvet evening gown. Behind her was Georgie Tompkins, in dinner jacket.

"Hold it, Sam," Johnny said. "Hello, Sue. What's that with you?"

Georgie's mouth twisted. "Go ahead and wreck the joint, Fletcher. These bartenders like that. And me, I'd like to see the fun."

"George," Susan Webb said sharply, "you promised!"

"All right, Susie," said Georgie. "I won't say another word. I'll think them, from now on, but I won't say them."

"Will you and Mr. Cragg join us—at a table?" Susan asked, smiling at Johnny.

"We'll do just that. Come on, Sam, sit down and cool off."

Several tables had been filled since Johnny and Sam had arrived, but there were still plenty of them available. Susan led the way to one at the far side of the room.

A waiter came instantly with the liquor card.

Georgie waved it away. "Two champagne cocktails."

Johnny snatched the card from the waiter. His eye ran rapidly down the list to, *Champagne cocktails, $1.50.* At the

bottom of the list was, *Beer, on Draught, 25 cents.*

He said, "And two beers," then he looked hard at Georgie.

"This is Dutch Treat, Sonny."

"You take care of your end, Fletcher," Georgie retorted haughtily. "I'll hold up mine."

Sam glowered. "Johnny means that you are going to pay for your own drinks and if beer's good enough for us it's—"

"—it's not good enough for us," Georgie said firmly.

"Sam," Johnny said, "what time is it?"

"I dunno, why?"

Johnny pulled out his dollar watch. "I make it nine-twenty. That leaves forty minutes. Or do you believe in letting children stay out after ten?" He looked hard at Sam Cragg. "He *is* your ward, you know, Sam. You inherited him."

"Why, you—" Georgie began chokingly.

"George!" Susan Webb interrupted. "And Mr. Fletcher! Will you stop treating him as if he's a child?"

"He's nineteen—he says."

"Who says I'm not?" Georgie demanded truculently.

"Mr. Fletcher," Susan said firmly, "I asked you to be here tonight, because I wanted to get things straightened out, but if you're going to act like this—you're going to spoil everything."

"You said you were going to tell me something tonight, Susan. Shall we talk about it—privately?"

"That's not necessary. It also concerns Mr. Cragg—and George."

"Oh, yes?"

"Yes" Susan Webb said firmly. "I know all about Mr. Julius' failure to provide for George and I don't think it's fair."

"Neither do I," Johnny declared. "I think Georgie's entitled to at least half of what Sam inherited. Half of minus nothing is—what?"

"Will you listen?" Susan asked fiercely. "I told you I was going to tell you what the trouble was all about. I am—and I'm going to talk against my father's interests. He's got as stubborn as everyone else and it's got to stop. Understand!"

HER blue eyes went around the three masculine faces.

"All right," she continued. "Father's place consists of 160 acres, yours—Mr. Cragg's—of only 40. The T.A.A. insists on the entire two hundred."

"What're the initials?"

"Trans-American Airways. They want to build an airport near St. Louis and our farms are the flattest around and just the distance they want to be from St. Louis. Now do you understand?"

"How much do they want to pay?"

"One hundred thousand dollars, which is a very good price."

"Your father's willing to sell his place?"

"Yes. It's Mr. Cragg who held up the sale."

"How come? If he was broke you'd think he'd be glad to pick up fifty thousand—"

Susan Webb exclaimed angrily, "Oh, you! That's it—that's what started the whole trouble. Of course Mr. Cragg would have been glad to get fifty thousand dollars. He said so, but you're being as stupid as he was. Stupid or stubborn. Father has 160 acres, Mr. Cragg—"

"Don't tell me again. Only forty acres." Johnny grinned. "In other words, your old—your father, thinks he should have four-fifths of the money, since his property consists of four-fifths of the total."

"Of course. That's so reasonable I don't see how anyone could think differently."

"Still," said Johnny, "the air company won't buy unless it can get the whole two hundred. Your father can't sell without our forty."

"Mr. Cragg's forty," corrected Susan.

"Sam's forty. Well, it looks to me as if Sam sort of has your father across a barrel."

Susan Webb slumped. "Mr. Fletcher,

do you mind awfully—just for a moment, if I talked to Mr. Cragg? After all, it is his property, you know."

"What Johnny says sounds good to me," Sam said gruffly. "Your old man can't sell without us, can he? Why should he get four-fifths of the dough?"

"Now wait, Mr. Cragg. Father doesn't *have* to sell, but what about you? Isn't there a mortgage on your farm—fifteen thousand dollars?"

"Sure, and we owe a lot of money besides—I guess. If I sell, I come out without a dime—"

"If you don't sell," cut in Georgie Tompkins, "you may find yourself behind the eight-ball. If you know what I mean."

"I don't, Georgie," Johnny said coldly. "Anyway, whose side are you on? And where would you make out if Sam sold for just enough to cover the debts?"

"That," said Susan Webb, "is what I've been trying to explain for the last half hour. Father doesn't have to sell his place, but he wants to. He—has some other interests. Therefore, to cut a long story short—and to settle the whole matter he's willing to go as high as thirty thousand."

"He told you to make us that offer?" Johnny asked bluntly.

Her nostrils flared. "He did not! He'd be furious if he even knew I had talked to you. But I know he'll pay that if he's approached properly."

"Well," said Johnny, "that's ten thousand clear—"

"Five," corrected Susan. "George is to have five thousand."

"Who says so?"

"I do. He has a right to it. Mr. Cragg was going to send him to college. That five thousand will take him there."

"Wait a minute," said Sam. "What about the bloodhounds?"

"George is willing that you have them."

Sam bared his teeth. "Oh, he is, is he? How long do you think *my* five grand would last, if I had to buy chow for that herd of elephants? I'll tell you what, I'll give him the dogs—all of them—and I'll take the ten thousand."

"Round seven coming up," Georgie Tompkins muttered.

"Quiet, youngster," Johnny said. "Furthermore, Miss Webb, there are holes in your story. Holes big enough for our St. Bernards to run through. You forgot Mr. Peter Suratt. And the Four Flying Pendletons!"

"That was nicely timed, Fletcher," said Georgie Tompkins, suddenly. "Look behind you!"

Johnny jerked around—and winced.

Andy Pendleton, Junior, was bearing down upon him. With him was a man an inch taller and ten pounds heavier, otherwise a twin of Andy.

"Hello, Mr. Fletcher," Andy Pendleton said. "Meet my brother, Angus."

Angus Pendleton nodded vigorously. "You were right, Andy, he does look like a trouble-maker. So you were going to wreck my place, Mr. Fletcher?"

"*Your* place?"

"Uh-huh, I own the Calico Cat."

Sam pushed back his chair. "If you birds are lookin' for trouble——"

"Oh, no, Mr. Cragg," said Andy Pendleton mockingly. "You're the one was lookin' for trouble."

Susan Webb pushed back her chair and got up. "George, take me home."

Johnny Fletcher looked at the truculent Pendletons. "I think we'll go home, too."

"So soon?" asked Angus Pendleton. "Why don't you stay around awhile? We are going to give away favors and have fun."

"Speaking of favors," declared Sam Cragg, "what kind of a joint is this that would put slugs in their pinball games? I run up a score of thirty thousand and what do I get for it? A handful of lead."

"You made thirty thousand on a Whizbango?" Andy Pendleton asked, unbelieving.

"Thirty thousand," snapped Sam, "and I want my two bucks."

"You're crazy, Cragg. Nobody ever made thirty thousand on a Whizbango—"

"I made it," howled Sam. "Johnny saw me do it—"

"That's right," Johnny agreed. "And he has got the slugs to prove it."

"Keep them as souvenirs," said Angus flippantly. "Hey you, young fellow," to Georgie Tompkins who was walking off, "you haven't paid your check."

GEORGIE came back and tossed a crumpled five-dollar bill on the table. "Keep the change, waiter," he sneered.

Johnny saw Susan and Georgie leaving and began edging toward the door. "Come on, Sam," he said, "we don't want any trouble tonight."

Sam followed him reluctantly. As they received their hats at the checkroom Sam plunked a lead slug on the counter. "There is your tip, Sister!"

He gave another slug to the attendant who brought the station wagon to the door. George and Susan had already disappeared.

As he drove the station wagon out to Manchester Road, Johnny said fretfully, "I wonder if she knew the Pendletons owned the Calico Cat when she made the date with me?"

"She must have known, Johnny," said Sam. "You know why I left that dump without smacking those two Pendletons? The place was a trap. There were a half dozen bouncers around with saps, waiting to light into us. At that, I wouldn't have minded the saps, but Andy Pendleton was packing a rod.

"*This* is a rod," said a smooth voice behind them. Something round and cold was pressed against the back of Sam's neck. A duplicate was touched against Johnny's neck.

Johnny groaned. "Now, what?"

"Now, we'll talk about that thirty-two thousand," said Pete Suratt. "You birds been giving me the run-around today."

"For the love of Mike, Suratt, you've got a one-track brain. We don't know anything about that thirty-two grand."

"Then why'd you go out to the track this afternoon?"

"How d'you kow we were out there?"

"I got eyes to see. You worked a neat tout. Still insist you don't know anything about horses?"

"I couldn't tell a race horse from a St. Bernard dog."

Suratt exhaled wearily. "All right, turn left at the next paved road."

"We're not going that way."

"Oh yes, we are."

"Like ducks," cried Sam. "G'wan, Johnny, he wouldn't dare."

"No, I wouldn't," said Suratt. He removed the pressure of the gun from Sam's neck and brought the weapon down upon his head.

Sam cried out in pain and lurched forward. Suratt leaned over and smashed his gun again on Sam's head. All this while his left-hand gun remained firmly against Johnny's neck.

A cold feather of fear was slithering up and down Johnny's spine. He gasped in horror as Sam's limp body collapsed against him. The big fellow wasn't faking.

He was out cold.

"Make the turn, Fletcher," Suratt said, tonelessly.

(*Part III in the next* SHORT STORIES

No Match For A Killer

By HARRISON HENDRYX

Author of "Outlaw's Wife," "Cold Cabin," etc.

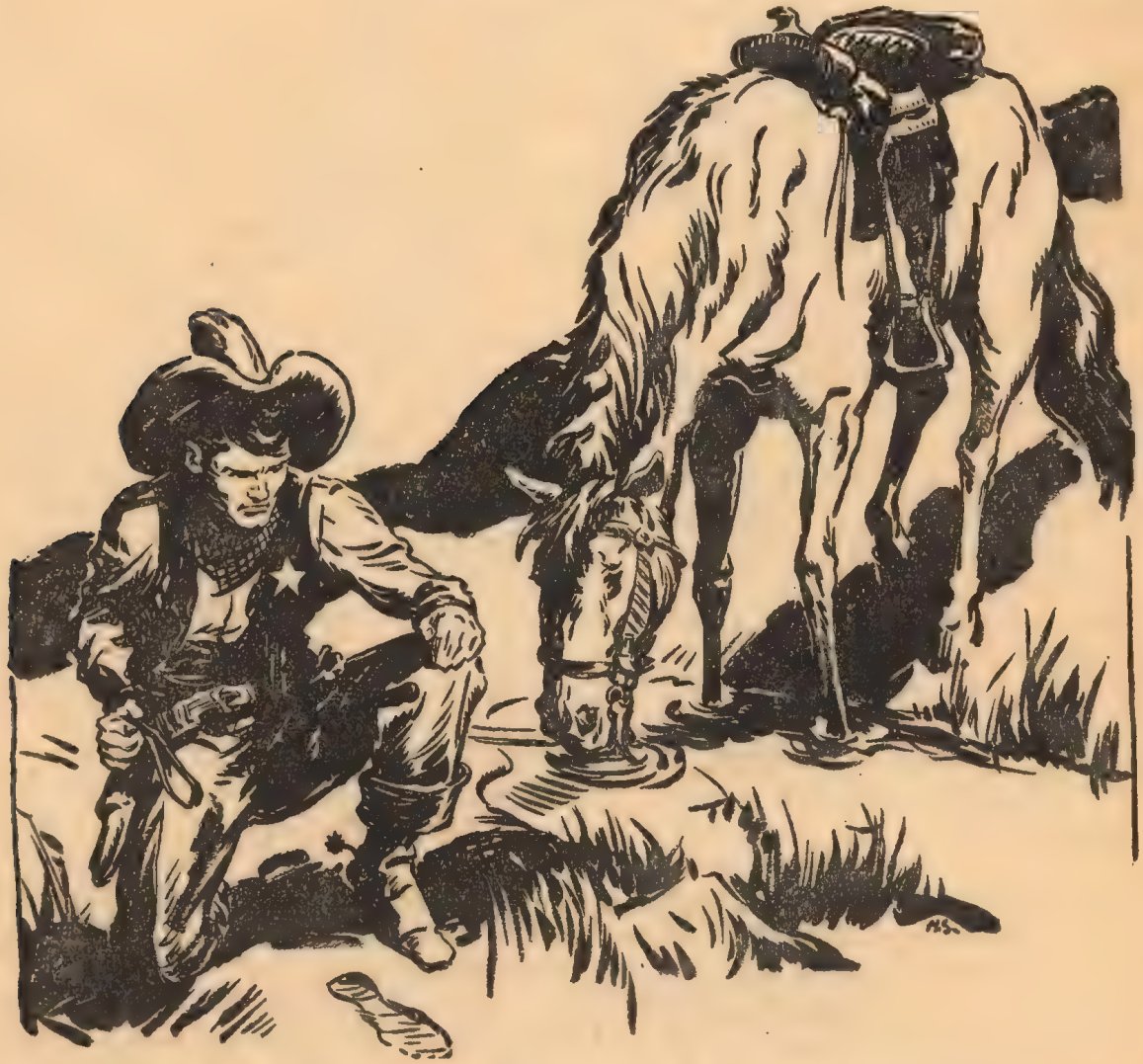
CHIPS clicked at a round table in the Herne City Saloon where a poker game was in progress. Dirk Armand was winning. "Three cards," he ordered, watching the deal with keen eyes.

"One," said Black Roly Nelson. He lifted the edge of the card slowly and looked at it. He bet.

Armand shuffled his cards with long fingers. He had drawn to a pair of sevens and caught three cold jacks. "I'll raise ten," he said, shoving blue chips into the pot.

Black Roly picked up his cards and surveyed them carefully. He squinted across the table. The dealer hadn't stayed and the one-eyed barber to his left considered silently for a moment before dropping out. Bert Strom, the gambler who banked the poker game, called the raise.

"I raise you back," Black Roly grunted.



And the Evidence Was in the Palm of His Hand!

Dirk Armand raised again and Strom folded. Black Roly boosted it and when Armand raised for the third time, he called. The men leaned forward to view the hands.

"Jacks full."

The notorious Black Roly Nelson scowled. "Mine is only nines full of deuces," he said. "You are very lucky."

Armand said, "Deal me out." He counted his chips and pushed them across to Bert Strom. Strom methodically recounted them.

"We do not get a chance to win back?" asked Black Roly in a voice that was soft for so big a man.

"Not today. It'll be past dark now by the time I reach my place. Some other day."

Shoving his chair back, Armand got to his feet. He pulled his broad Stetson forward over graying brown hair and stood with fingers gently tapping the cartridge loops of his gunbelt. Bert Strom handed him some bills and he folded them and turned to the bar.

"Whiskey."

Removing tobacco and a packet of papers from his shirt, Armand rolled a cigarette. He removed a second paper from the packet before returning it to his pocket. Then he lit the cigarette and stood watching the match burn toward his fingers. Presently he blew out the flame. Knocking the bulge from the burnt end of the match, he made a rapid sketch upon the extra cigarette paper.

The bartender leaned toward him. "Black Roly, eh?" he grinned. "It sure do look jest like him. You draw good, Armand."

"M-m-m-m-m-m," said Dirk Armand, twisting his head to view the sketch critically. He flipped aside the burnt match and emptied his whiskey glass at a swallow. Then suddenly, as though recalling business elsewhere, he strode out of the saloon.

When he had disappeared Black Roly cashed in his chips and ambled to the bar. The floor creaked under his weight. He reached out and picked the charcoal sketch from the surface of the bar with a great, meaty hand before the bartender could grab it.

"Ah—Armand do this. Nobody draw so good as Armand. Some day he will draw too good and Black Roly will draw a bead on him with a forty-five." He laughed and the laughter, unlike his voice, bellowed loudly through the barroom.

The men looked up from the poker table and then quickly back to their cards. The bartender turned away, his face guilty. Black Roly laughed alone.

DARK clouds rolled over the western sky and turned the late, dull glow of dusk into darkness. Charlie Sangster reined his horse slowly through Bottleneck Pass and thought of Elsa Armand. The young sheriff thought of Dirk Armand, too, and the trouble he was having to keep the Dry Basin waterhole fenced. Ed Taylor owned cattle that would water at Dry Basin if Armand's fence were not there. And Taylor was a man who lived on the edge of the badlands, a man whose code said that a prone fence was worth two standing ones.

Then there was Black Roly Nelson; he lived three miles north and could also make use of Dry Basin without a fence. And men talked about Black Roly clear to Fort Benton. Armand's fence was the center—

A flash cut into Charlie Sangster's thoughts and the report of a gun and a smashing something that struck his left arm like the steel calks of a shod horse. The shot came from the craggy heights overlooking the pass. He dug spurs into his horse and heard another bullet sing harmlessly off the rocks behind him.

Half a mile beyond the pass he pulled up to inspect his arm. Luckily, the bullet had missed the bone and traveled cleanly through the flesh of his under forearm.

The man in ambush had done well to get any kind of hit in such darkness, he thought as he tied his bandanna tightly above the wound.

There was a light in Armand's house. Charlie slid out of the saddle and knocked on the door before opening it. His arm was bleeding freely. He could feel the warm wetness that soaked the sleeve of his flannel shirt. A dark-haired girl with startled blue eyes stepped back toward the far wall as he entered.

"Oh—Charlie!" she breathed in relief. "I knew it wasn't Dad and— Your arm! What happened to your arm?"

The concern in her face was so genuine that the young sheriff grinned. "Got in the road of a shootin' star, I reckon. Seems like this here star musta figgered I was your pa. Where is he, Elly?"

Fear returned to the blue eyes. "He went into town about noon, didn't you see him?"

Charlie Sangster shook his head. "No, I didn't see him but I didn't look. I naturally figgered he'd be out here. Now don't go worryin' them pretty curls of yours about Dirk Armand. If there's anybody I know can take care of hisself it's him."

"But whoever shot at you—they'll be waiting for him."

"No. They musta figgered I was him and when they blazed at me and missed there wouldn't be no use in hangin' 'round the pass no longer. They think he's already gone through, see?"

Elsa nodded. She was a practical girl. "How bad is it, Charlie?" she asked, leading him to the washstand in the kitchen. "Here, let me help you off with that shirt."

"Tahhh, it ain't bad at all!" he snorted. "Jest a flesh wound but it shore bleeds good, eh?"

She filled the basin with hot water from a kettle on the back of the stove and went quickly for clean towels and gauze. She washed the blood from his arm and neatly bandaged the damaged area. Then she brought him one of Dirk Armand's shirts.

"You know, Elly—you'd make a man a mighty nice wife. When are you gonna marry me?" He dug papers and tobacco from the pocket of his abandoned shirt and rolled a cigarette.

COLOR darkened her cheeks and she turned away, making a pretense of anger. "At least, not until you grow up," she said. "You don't take life seriously enough. You get shot and you make jokes about it—'reckon I got in the road of a shootin' star'," she mocked him, wrinkling her nose in the pleasing way that she had. "And then, of course, there's a minor point called love."

"Them points is almost too small to mention. They're all overlookable, every one of 'em." He thought how nice it would be to kiss her; but he didn't.

She ignored his words. "And I certainly would never marry you until you give up this crazy idea of being sheriff. Some day someone's going to plug you again and it won't be in the arm, either. I don't want to be the widow of the late Charlie Sangster!"

He laughed. "Raisin' cattle don't seem to be no safer way to make a livin' to me. I mean—"

"You mean Dad, don't you?" she broke in.

"Well—yes, I mean your dad; and there is plenty others that's in the same spot. Range wars, waterholes, cattle rustlin'. It jest seems like cattlemen is bound to fight one another."

Worry settled over her clean features. It tightened her lips and made little creases along her brow. "The decent ones wouldn't," she said. "It's the ones like Ed Taylor and that gunman of his, Bronc Wiel, and—and Black Roly Nelson! You are the sheriff, why don't you get them? They'll never in the world obey a law that they have no fear or respect for!"

"Whoa, honey," he grinned, "I got no argument there. The law's weak, but we

can't just go out and round 'em up like so many dogies. With men you've got to have evidence, and with smart men like Taylor and Black Roly that's a thing is hard to get."

The blue eyes flicked over him scornfully. "If you'd spend fewer nights in saloons and 'most any night watching Dry Basin you'd get all the evidence you need. Our neighbors seem to think fencing is a game that's played with wire cutters and axes. If we can't keep Dry Basin fenced it'll be dry by mid-summer."

"Yeah, and by the way things is shapin' up there's gonna be plenty trouble 'tween now and then, too. I don't like it, Elly."

"I wish Dad would get home," Elsa said.

Charlie Sangster was silent for some moments. "You ain't asked me but I reckon I'll jest roll into that extra bunk in the spare room and have a look around in the mornin'. I gotta go take care of my horse now. I left him standin' outside the door when I come in with my arm shot. He's trained good, though, he'll be there."

A PALE moon shone through a thin cloud blanket and disclosed Armand's small corral and his hay barn. Charlie carried the lantern Elsa had given him and when he reached the dull shadows of the barn he paused abruptly, stopped breathing. Hoofbeats sounded beyond the roll of prairie that lifted behind the barn and then dropped away to the rocks of Bottleneck Pass. Sighting an empty pail, he turned it over the lantern and pulled his horse into the shadows.

Presently the rider appeared over the rise. He reined in and approached the yard carefully. Charlie could see the horse was shiny with sweat. He could see light patches of foam along his withers and could hear his hard, rapid breathing. The man had come fast. Then he saw it was Dirk Armand.

"It's Charlie," he called, removing the pail from over the lantern. "Howdy, Dirk."

Armand wheeled his horse quickly. "Hello, Charlie."

"You been hittin' some leather!"

"Yeah, I didn't get started from town till late. I don't much fancy leavin' Elsa after dark."

They put up their horses and the sheriff related his ambush at Bottleneck Pass. "It was likely Taylor or that damn Bronc Wiel he hired. The dirty skunks would as soon shoot a man in the back as look at him!" Armand snorted. "We've about come to a showdown over Dry Basin. It's my land, my waterhole, my fence but I can't keep 'em off it! 'Course that ambusher coulda been Black Roly."

"Black Roly?"

"Yeah. I won quite a wad playin' poker this afternoon. He was still playin' when I left but he coulda slipped out and beat me to the pass. Somehow, though, I don't think Black Roly Nelson would pot a man."

"I wonder," Sangster said thoughtfully.

"He's a crook and he'd cut down my fence without battin' an eye, but he ain't the same breed o' cats as Taylor and Wiel. They're plain skunks!"

"Yeah, they're skunks but I wouldn't bank too heavy on Black Roly neither," said the young sheriff. "This waterhole wrangle is more serious'n I figgered. I reckon it's one deal I'm settin' in on."

The older man grinned. There was a bond between these two, stronger than the natural tie created by Elsa Armand.

IN THE morning they rode to Dry Basin. The fence had been cut in several places. Armand went about repairing it in tight-lipped silence. Charlie Sangster helped and studied horse tracks that disappeared into the rocks of Snake Hills. Snake Hills was a narrow rock ridge that stretched for miles over the prairie. It began in the distant Bearpaw Mountains, curved down past Herne City and entered

the badlands just south of Armand's waterhole. And for far into those sandy, desolate wastes it flung its crags of smooth rock. Trailing was impossible there.

When the fence was restored Charlie said, "I got to be in town this afternoon. I'm gonna swing fer there now. I want to kinda look Bottleneck Pass over, where the guy tried to plug me last night."

"It's an idea but I don't guess the rocks'll show much."

"Maybe not. It ain't gonna hurt to look, though. I'll be out soon as I can, which likely won't be fer a couple days. If anythin' breaks let me know."

"I—Charlie," Armand said hesitantly, "if—well, if things just don't happen to pan out right I'd be mighty grateful if you'd look out for Elsa."

"And I reckon I'd be a mighty plain damn fool if I didn't," he grinned. "Sure I'll look after her, Dirk, but what the hell —you're gonna be around fer quite a spell yet yourself. Elly don't have much time fer my sheriff's badge. I guess she figgers I jest ain't quite man enough to fill it."

Armand laughed. "Blarney! It's plain you're a young feller, Charlie; it's plain you don't know hardly nothin' at all about women."

Charlie turned his gelding toward Herne City. "Solong," he called.

Bottleneck Pass was a cut through the highest point in Snake Hills. The sheriff left his horse and climbed into the rocks to a ledge which hung a short way out over the pass. It had been here that the gun had flashed in the early darkness of last night.

Charlie inspected the rock promontory with sure eyes and found what he was searching for—an empty shell. It was shorter than he had expected. It was from a .45 six-gun instead of a rifle. The dent made by the firing pin was to one side of the cap, nearly between the cap and the ring of metal surrounding it. The pin had struck off-center.

Slipping the empty cartridge into his pocket, he looked for another. The man had fired twice, but he could find only the one empty shell. Presently he made his way back down the rocks to his horse.

It was three days later before Charlie Sangster rode back through the pass. When he topped the rise and rode down into the short valley of Armand's homestead a mounting uneasiness crept over him. Deep silence lay over the buildings that shimmered in the noonday heat. His horse's hoofs clopped unnaturally on the hard-packed dirt of the yard.

PULLING up, he strained his senses for a sound or movement. There was none beyond the puffing of the black gelding under him. His spur rowels jangled loudly as he walked up the steps to the door. His knock was hollow and the stillness settled in after it like a dank fog. He opened the door.

"Dirk! Elly!" An echo mocked him. He passed hastily through the rooms. A cheap clock ticked on the kitchen table and relief raced through his lean body. They had been here not long ago, anyway. Likely they had gone riding to Dry Basin or to check on their cattle, Charlie reasoned. But inside something told him that wasn't the answer.

He returned to his horse, mounted and swung off toward Dry Basin. As he reached the crest of the valley a strange sight met his eyes. Two riders were coming across the range in single file. Black Roly Nelson rode the fore horse, his great, black beard unmistakable in the sunlight. And riding the second horse, carbine slung purposefully across the pommel of her saddle—Elsa Armand!

Charlie Sangster stopped and waited for them. Despite the gravity of the situation he could not help grinning.

"Fer God sakes, Charlie!" Black Roly groaned. "I couldn't shoot no filly! She claims I done some'pin to her pa which I ain't."

The sheriff noted the absence of the

big man's gunbelt. "What's up, Elly?" He knew by her eyes that she'd been crying. Tears had dulled the clear blue.

"Dad didn't come home last night," she said. "This morning I trailed this black scum from Dry Basin to the very doorstep of his shack. He didn't even try to cover his tracks, rode wide of Snake Hills and left tracks as plain as the beard on his face."

"Shore, an' why not? I come from town an' stopped to water my horse at the Basin. I got nothin' to cover."

"How did you get through the fence?" Charlie shot.

"The fence was down."

"And you cut it down!" Elsa said angrily. "Oh, please, I don't care about the fence—please, where is my father?"

"Honest, lady, I ain't seen Dirk Armand since about four days ago in a poker game an' I didn't cut that fence neither."

"Who did?"

Black Roly said, "I don't know fer shore but I got me one damn good hunch. They's a party lives jest acrost the hills from the basin name o' Taylor that wouldn't mind none at all if that there fence was down. An' that feller with the broken nose that's workin' fer him—that Bronc Wiel—why, he shoulda be'n borned with horns on."

"All right, Roly," said the sheriff, "you can go, but if that fence gets cut again there's gonna be trouble."

"Stay where you are," ordered the girl as the big man reined his horse around. She lifted the carbine menacingly and Black Roly stayed. "If you won't do your work, Sheriff, then I'm going to. This man has either killed or kidnaped my father and you say to turn him loose! What kind of law do you stand for, anyway?"

Her words cut him. "I don't know's Roly's the guilty party, that's why," he said. "Go on, Roly."

"No," snapped the girl, bringing the gun to her shoulder.

Charlie rode past Black Roly Nelson to where Elsa sat with leveled rifle. He took it from her and shucked the shells from it and then slipped it into the leather scabbard that was lashed to her saddle. Tears became too full for her eyes and ran over and down her cheeks.

He touched one of her tanned arms reassuringly. "It's all right, honey, your nerves is jest shot. I wanta find your pa as much as you but that ain't no way to do it." He looked at the broad, disappearing back of the outlaw. "We got nothin' agin him but suspicion and that don't hold a man fer long. I don't figger that Black Roly's our man nohow—it's jest a hunch I got."

"Don't touch me!" she sobbed, her shoulders shaking. "Don't touch me! I never want to see you again!"

SHE could hurt him. He moved away and she dug long bootheels into her horse's ribs and galloped down the slope of the valley to the house. He watched her from the crest for some moments before turning toward Dry Basin.

At dusk he returned to Armand's place. He did not go to the house but built a fire near the corral. Removing the brown canvas sack from the packstraps of his saddle, he brought out a frying pan and a small coffee pot and bacon and cold bannocks. When he had eaten he walked to the door and knocked. There was no response so he pushed inside. He heard Elsa move behind the closed door of her room.

"It's me," he said, "Charlie. I'm gonna take a blanket from the spare room."

Elsa said nothing. Procuring the blanket, he went to the barn and wrapping it around him, bedded down in the soft hay. He slept soundly and arose in the morning well before the sun. After a light breakfast he repacked the canvas sack and tied it, together with the blanket, behind the cantle of his saddle. Then he swung the black gelding toward Ed Taylor's layout.

Taylor was located in a box canyon upon the very edge of the badlands. There were

springs in the canyon but not enough water was produced by them for his cattle. Charlie suspected that most of the cattle had been rustled from the big Bar T outfit to the south. He wasn't sure, the Bar T had never complained. Taylor's spread was just small enough so that he and Bronc Wiel could take care of it without extra hands.

As the sheriff rode up to the dilapidated set of shacks, Bronc Wiel stepped from the doorway of one and stood eyeing him, his thumbs hooked carelessly beneath the worn leather of his cartridge belt. He was a squat, ugly man with a broken nose that hooked over his upper lip. He was tough and knew it.

"Taylor around?"

"Nope."

"Where's he at?"

Bronc Wiel shrugged, spat tobacco juice into the dirt at his feet.

"Do you know when he'll be back?"

"No," Wiel said, hitching his gunbelt higher.

Charlie Sangster curved a leg around his saddle horn and rolled a cigarette. He smoked in silence for a long time while the other stood watching with cold eyes and firmly planted feet. At length he flipped away the cigarette butt and dropped his leg to the stirrup. "I'll be back," he said.

Charlie rode to Herne City for his deputy, Billy Webb. He found him in the sheriff's office at the front of the jail. "C'mon, Billy, I want you to ride out and watch Armand's waterhole tonight."

"I don't hardly reckon that's necessary. We got the guy that's been cuttin' his fence behind bars right now—Ed Taylor. And guess who brung him in, Charlie?"

"My guess'd be Black Roly Nelson."

Billy Webb's face fell. "Well, I'll be damned! How'd you know?"

"Jest a hunch, Billy. Did either one of 'em say anythin' about Armand?"

The deputy scowled thoughtfully. "No, That is—wait a minute! Black Roly said somethin' about Taylor's bein' a dirty rat to try to cut a lady's fence. It didn't seem like nothin' important."

"Armand's disappeared," Charlie said. "The lady would be Elsa, his daughter. If anythin' happened to him the spread and fence and everythin' would be hers. Black Roly mighta brung in Taylor to kinda throw suspicion away from hisself. Reckon I'll have a talk with the prisoner."

HE UNLOCKED the barred gate which led to a double row of cells in the rear of the jail building. The high heels of his boots clicked rythmically on the cobblestone floor as he strode to Taylor's cell.

"An' if it ain't our high an' mighty sheriff!" sneered the man from his grilled cage.

Charlie Sangster ignored the taunt. "Where's Armand?" he asked, his eyes narrowing.

"Armand? How'n hell would I know cooped up in a box like this?"

"I figgered you mighta plugged him 'fore you come in here and then tried to cut his fence." He watched the prisoner's face carefully. "Fence cuttin' goes pretty good when the guy that owns the fence is outta yer way—'course, that's barrin' Black Roly Nelson."

"That Black Devil! He framed me. I tell yuh he framed me to shield his own dirty hide."

Sangster turned away in disgust. "They are all the same," he said to Billy Webb, "all try to throw muck at the other guy. Say, where's Taylor's gun?"

"Right there in the office. Ol' Black Roly had it looped acrost his saddle horn."

When he had locked the gate Charlie walked to where a gunbelt was slung over the back of a chair. He slipped the gun from its holster, aimed it at a chunk of stovewood and pulled the trigger. He fired again and then flipped the cylinder open and ejected the empty shells. Scrutinizing the dented caps, he tossed them into the woodbox.

"I kinda figgered the gun wouldn't center-fire, but she did. Now listen, Billy, I want you to go out to Armand's anyway. I want you to go out there and see that nothin' happens to Elsa. I'm sendin' you because I trust you more'n any other man in town."

Billy Webb's chest expanded with pride. "Sure, Boss."

"I got me a hunch and I'm gonna foller it up. I'll deputize Mike to watch the jail." He paused to check the cartridge loops in his belt with strong fingers. They were full. "Billy, if you wanted to get shet of a man complete and leave no trace at all, where'd you take him?"

Webb's face puckered into its characteristic scowl which invariably accompanied deep concentration. "I never give it much thought," he said, "I never hated no one that bad. But if I was to plug a guy and didn't want to leave no trace I reckon I'd take him along Snake Hills fer a far way into the badlands."

"That's reasonable," agreed Charlie Sangster. "Fact is, that there's my hunch, too."

LATER that afternoon Charlie picked his way along the summit of Snake Hills which led into the very heart of the badlands. The sun bore down mercilessly. It lathered the gelding and made dark blotches of sweat upon the rider's flannel shirt, where it fitted snugly across his shoulders. The hills tapered at this point till they were but a rock ridge stretching on and on through sand and cactus and through little, hopeless clumps of sagebrush.

Lifting the canteen he had brought, the sheriff wet his lips. "Wish I could give some to you, old boy, but there ain't enough to do you no good. You got to make Alky Springs by dark er go without water."

They reached the alkali waterhole at dusk. Charlie studied the ground closely before dismounting. There were horse tracks in the sand at the edge of the waterhole. The tracks couldn't have been made more than a few days before or sand would have covered them. Away from the pocket they disappeared immediately into hard rock.

Slipping from the saddle, he let his horse nose the water. The horse snorted at first but drank. And then Charlie saw the boot track of a man. It was at the opposite edge of the puddle, faint but unmistakable. He skirted the water and measured it. It was about an inch shorter than his own track and looked as though wet sand had been thrown on it, had dried and blown free. Clearly, an attempt had been made to destroy the human trace.

Hoping to conserve the contents of his canteen, Charlie dipped some of the cloudy water from the waterhole. By vigorously boiling it and adding a great quantity of tea, he found that the concoction was drinkable. This with cold meat made up his meal. When he had finished he fed the gelding from a small sack of oats which he had packed on the back of his saddle. Then climbing from the rocks to the softer sand floor of the desert badlands, he rolled in his blanket and fell asleep.

The ridge past the alkali waterhole was new to him. He rode through the dawn and the rising sun, all the while following the snaky windings of the rock column. About mid-morning he paused on the brink of a sprawling, flat boulder to watch the flight of a buzzard. The big, carrion bird wheeled in wide circles and finally settled to the flats a mile from the ridge.

Doubt and a sudden fear for his friend gripped Charlie Sangster as he made out the dark outline of a second buzzard circling the hazy blue sky. He scanned the dry earth for sign of a trail leading off through the sand, but there was none. The sand was barren here with wind designs running through it like the delicate veins in the nostrils of a horse. He raised his eyes to the shimmering horizon and heat filled them and made the clumps of sage-

brush dance in its power. Reluctantly he turned his horse from the rocks.

There had been no wind for three days; Charlie thought there should be a trail. And then he spied it—coming in from further along the rocks and leading toward the point where the buzzards had settled. Maybe a horse had wandered the ridge into this arid hell and finding no feed had stumbled out onto the sand to die. But he knew that this was a vague, unlikely hope and when he swung into the sandy trail he knew that it had been in vain. Two sets of horse tracks pointed into the desert and but one returned.

He could see the turgid, distended belly of the dead horse for perhaps half a mile before he reached it. The horse had been shot through the head. And just beyond lay the man—lifeless and swollen in the sun. As the rider approached several buzzards squawked and stretched their ungainly necks. Some shuffled a few feet off into the sand and others arose with clacking wings.

Three bullet holes showed plainly in the back of Dirk Armand's gray alpaca shirt and a short distance from his body, as though magnified by the sun, lay six empty shells. Picking them up, Charlie noted instantly that all possessed off-center dents in their caps. A stained cigarette lay on the sand, burned to the saliva ring, and the dead man's right hand still held the match that had lit it.

Burnt match! Charlie's brain raced. Armand had been able to do things with a burned match—remarkable things. The sheriff looked about the body closely. Upon the left wrist he found fragments of printed words. The buzzards had messed the printing beyond legibility. They had torn the soft wrist flesh but had left the tougher, more calloused skin of the palm untouched. And in the palm of the dead man's left hand was the bare profile of a man, a simple sketch made by one sweep of the burnt match. The profile showed a broken nose. It was clear—there could be no mistake—the sketch was of Bronc Wiel.

In his mind he pictured what had taken place. Armand had been allowed to smoke a cigarette and, with his back to Wiel, had hastily scrawled information upon the wrist and palm of his left hand. Probably as he worked Bronc Wiel had lifted his gun and fired three shots into that unprotected gray alpaca, and then emptied the remaining three into Armand's horse. A sick anger settled into the stomach of Charlie Sangster.

HE THOUGHT suddenly that Black Roly might have committed the murder and then scribbled evidence of Bronc Wiel on the dead man's hand. But the more he thought of this the more he knew it wasn't true. Black Roly couldn't have sketched that well and he couldn't have forced Armand to do it and frame an innocent man. And, too, the man who had murdered Armand had been so confident the body would never be found that he had made no attempt to even hide his empty cartridges. Bronc Wiel was unquestionably the guilty man.

Scooping a shallow grave in the sand with his hands, Charlie buried the body of his friend. He pulled Armand's beautifully stamped saddle from the dead horse and tied it with pack straps to the rear of his own hull. Elsa would want the saddle, he thought. It would be hard to tell her of Dirk Armand. He knew that she loved him as only a motherless daughter could love her father.

His face reflected the bitterness inside him and the hardness of the rock ridge he followed. He rode as rapidly as possible, the need for search now gone. He had trailed his hunch into the badlands and found what he had dreaded. And now Bronc Wiel must pay.

The sun was a blazing a red ball on the western horizon as he rode into the shadows cast by the tiny cluster of buildings which made up Ed Taylor's home spread.

The squat man with the ugly, broken nose waddled out as before and stood with thumbs hooked beneath his cartridge belt. Then he saw the saddle that was snubbed on behind the rider and his thumbs came out from beneath the belt and his gun arm described a more pronounced crook at the elbow.

Charlie did not take his eyes from him as he swung from leather. The two stood facing each other, staring coldly. Bronc Wiel's face was a mask; he was tough.

"Unbuckle your gunbelt," ordered the sheriff in a soft voice, "I'm taking you in for the murder of Dirk Armand."

A sneer pulled at the lips of the squat man, disclosed the crooked, yellow teeth beyond. Other than this he made no move. "How d'yuh figger I done that, Sheriff?"

Charlie's voice was casual, dangerous, low. "You shot him in the back. You left your empties layin' in the sand. Before he got plugged Armand drawed a picture of you. It was a good picture—showed your broken nose plain. Unbuckle that gun-belt, Wiel, er draw—'cause I'm takin' you in one way or another!"

Still the man stood without moving, as though frozen. Then from beyond him, from the shack came Ed Taylor's voice: "Not so fast, Sheriff." He stepped from the doorway with a six-gun in each hand. Taylor was out of jail!

Charlie knew that it was now or never. He knew that without his gun they would shoot him down as Bronc Wiel had shot Armand. Dropping flat, he drew as he fell. Guns barked and he could hear the close hiss of bullets. Taylor was a notoriously poor shot.

He got Taylor in his sights and squeezed the trigger and squeezed it again and again. Then he rolled to the right just as Wiel's gun spewed a withering hail of lead. Charlie felt one of the slugs kick his shoulder and out of the corner of his eye he saw Taylor weave and fall forward on his face.

He fired at Bronc Wiel and missed. He fired again and saw the squat, little man stiffen but stay on his feet. Wiel was steadying his Colt over his left arm, taking careful aim, when Charlie's last shot ripped into him. His knees sagged and he seemed to melt instead of fall to the ground.

RISING, Charlie felt the pain in his shoulder. There had been nothing but the dazing blow of the bullet until then. He walked to Bronc Wiel and took the gun from his hand. The shells all were dented off-center but one. That one hadn't been fired. Subconsciously he measured the dead Wiel's boots and saw that they checked with the track he had found in the alkali waterhole.

A glance told him that Ed Taylor was dead, too. Charlie knew he had been lucky, that he had pulled out of a tight spot with only a shoulder wound. His horse had bolted at sound of the gunfire but had not gone far and he caught him easily. The shoulder was throbbing now and he rode toward Armand's house which was just over the summit of Snake Hills.

The whole left side of his shirt was wet with blood. He could feel it trickle down his arm and soak into the shirt below the elbow. Elsa must have seen it, as he rode up, for she started to turn away and then stopped with little shades of horror darkening her blue eyes.

Charlie felt strangely weak. Better to give it to her straight, he thought. "They killed him, Elly—your pa. Bronc Wiel did. I jest plugged him and Taylor in a shoot-out and they nicked me—"

He felt himself slipping from the saddle and, as he reached for the horn, a blanket of red pain swept over him, engulfing him. Through it he could hear the girl cry: "Billy Webb! Oh, where are you? Help me, Billy!" And then he lost consciousness completely.

When he could see again the sun was throwing bright rays through the east window. It was morning. Elsa was sitting

in a chair beside his bed. She leaned over and put a cool hand to his forehead.

"Feel better?"

He nodded and was content to just lie there and look at her. He thought that she was different from all the rest of this hard, wild country. She was so gentle and pretty—and so real.

"The doctor says you're going to live," Elsa said.

"The doctor?"

She smiled at his question. "Billy Webb rode to get him. He's resting in the next room now. He says you're going to live," she repeated absently, "but that'll probably be just long enough to stop another bullet."

He lay silent for some time. "What'd you say if I didn't run no more fer sheriff? My time's near up and I jest wouldn't have to run no more. Billy Webb's a good man and he'd like bein' sheriff. I could kinda work a little layout somewheres and maybe get married. What'd you say to that, Elly?"

She looked out the window. "That last part sounds nice," she said, "but Billy Webb—he's just a kid. He'd be no match for a killer like Bronc Wiel. The country needs good men running it and that's the only way it'll ever be safe." She paused to look at him and she wrinkled her nose in the way that she had. "I guess we could hire somebody to run the place."

Charlie grinned and with his good arm he reached for her. Those blue eyes were really much prettier at close range, he thought.

All Federal Proving Ground was out to see that the Congressman learned to fly. He had to be got out of their hair somehow, Loose Lip Lock opined. . . . .

WINGS FOR THE CONGRESSMAN

A novelette in the next

SHORT STORIES

by

ANDREW A. CAFFREY

THE DUTCHMAN'S LITTLE LESSON

By R. V. GERY

Author of Many Stories of the Famous Kappie De Vries

I

IN THE piping times of peace, before ever the magic word blitzkrieg was coined or the world went mad, they used to say about Kappie De Vries that his middle name was trouble, and he would sooner fight than eat. Even when he staggered everybody by marrying Micaela Van Rhyn, twenty-five years his junior, and raising a family, they still held that he was essentially a ripsnorter, a man of blood, a holy terror—

So that, when the red hand of war came creeping closer to the Dutch Indies, and Holland itself fell to the invader, and Batavia became to all intents and purposes the capital of a nation—when lethargic, easy-going Dutchman took to staying up nights with their worries, and grew pouchy-eyed and skinny—it was the opinion of many that Kappie's hour had come.

". . . There Was a Head Over the Window-Sill. Kappie Knew That the Dim Figure Had a Knife, and That It Was an Artist at Its Trade"

The *vervloekt* old crocodile, men said gloomily, would have a bellyful of what he liked now, any time he wanted it.

They were correct, the pink-gin swillers in the club at Makassar. Mynheer Inspector ran into a packet of trouble all right. But it was by no means the kind of trouble the croakers anticipated, or that Kappie De Vries relished, or knew how to handle.

It was wife-trouble, to be exact. Wife-trouble of all things, to overtake Makassar's terrible and justly dreaded chief of police. *"Wat drommel!"* muttered the gin-swillers—which might possibly be interpreted as "For God's sake!"

Upon a day, Makassar lay out under the sweltering sun, nervous and touchy as the rest of a hysterical world. In its roadstead were a couple of modern, heavy cruisers of the Dutchman's fleet, fighting planes roared where once the stately airliners of the K.L.M. had glided to a landing, native troops drilled frantically on the parade-ground, and there was an ugly internment-camp up in the hills, full of Germans.

Across in Singapore, the British lay low, waiting behind their billion-dollar defenses for the East to blow up like the West had. In Makassar's Leidenstraat, in a building with a fried-egg flag outside it, the Japanese also lay low—waiting, too, for somebody to strike a match in Tokio. Straight north, the Frenchmen in Indo-China were looking cross-eyed at one another, wondering what came next in a cataclysm of disaster— It was like living in a powder-magazine.

Kappie came out of his office and stood on the steps for a moment, licking wicked lips.

He had just been forty fathoms deep in his work—the job he was made for, handling the spy-situation round and about. Driving a many-colored, curious team of agents, lurkers, and hole-and-corner experts against the new kind of international,

who was about five hundred times more dangerous than the old.

It was a job after Kappie's own heart. He had that very morning put the skids under one of these gentry, and seen him led away to whatever it was awaited him up yonder in the citadel. And now, around noon, Kappie De Vries patted himself on the back, and looked about for a drink.

The club was up the road, and he turned towards it.

Then, he stopped. Just for an instant an incredulous, puzzled look appeared in his bright-blue eyes and he blinked. There was a quick tightening of his mouth-corners.

His wife, the dark and lovely Micaela De Vries, was crossing the street fifty yards away.

She had a basket on her arm, like a dozen other respectable *mevrouws* in sight, and ordinarily Kappie would have gone across to see what it was she had planned for his evening meal. But not this time—not by any means this time, for almighty and likewise *goedverdom,* Micaela was not alone!

She had with her a personage Kappie knew by sight and reputation, and despised most heartily upon both counts. His name was Mr. Bertram Green, he came from London, England, and he had been for some time the subject of plenty of caustic comment from the ribald gentlemen in the club verandah. The town lady-killer, in fact, and hell on wheels at the game, at that.

And, he was talking gaily to Micaela De Vries, upon the open Leidenstraat, and Micaela was liking it.

Kappie De Vries stood stock-still, watching the scene. *Ja,* there was no possible manner of doubt, his eyes were not playing tricks with him. The lady wife of Makassar's police chief, the descendant of Dyak pirate chiefs, a pillar of the community, was walking and talking and, O thunder in the sky, flirting in broad daylight with a little *schellum* who ought, said Kappie—

He said under his breath what manner of unprintable things should be the lot of Mr. Bertram Green of London, England.

THEN he pulled himself up with a jerk, settled his helmet on the back of his head, and marched directly for Micaela.

She was alone now, and Mr. Green was walking away, swinging the dinky yellow cane he carried and flicking a bright silk bandanna handkerchief. Micaela saw Kappie, apparently for the first time, and beamed.

"Ah, fat man!" she said. "I was just looking for you."

There was a faint something in her expression, in that smile and twinkle, that might just possibly have been a grin, Kappie told himself. He attempted sarcasm.

"So," he said a trifle hoarsely, "I had observed—"

Micaela's smile died, and was replaced by a quizzical, half-teasing grimace. "You are trying to be funny, mynheer, is that it?" she queried. "Something has upset you, no?"

Kappie went purple, right there on the Leidenstraat. "Funny!" he choked. "Listen to me, madame—"

He spoke in a husky whisper, perfectly conscious that the eyes of half Makassar were upon him, and that there was gleeful whispering behind the hands up on the club verandah. Micaela heard him out, swinging her basket in silence, and when he had run down from sheer breathlessness she put her head on one side.

"So?" she observed. "Very good, mynheer—very good. I am to do this and not to do that, eh? To watch my steps, and not talk to the gentlemen if they talk to me? To be a good, obedient wife, like some of these other *mevrouws* I see? That is nice, Mynheer the Inspector . . . And now, if you please, do you listen to me!"

She dropped her voice to match Kappie's own, and what she said was pure distilled vitriol. It centered upon the theme that Kappie De Vries was a fool, and played a masterly set of variations on that subject.

It bit and clawed and blistered, and rocked Kappie on his heels, and made him feel like a crawling worm in his own familiar surroundings. And then Micaela turned and walked away, still swinging her market-basket and nodding and smiling to acquaintances, and Kappie De Vries drew a deep breath.

"Almighty!" he said blankly to the world at large.

He went up into the club verandah, quite conscious of the amused eyes that watched him—and he was well into his third drink before he felt in any sense fit for human society. Gevaerts, the lanky warrior with the big nose who commanded the garrison, had been mutely sympathetic in a neighboring chair; but now he rose, glass in hand, and came across.

"A fine day, Kappie," he said easily. "You will join me in another one, eh? In these times one needs a little building-up, I find."

Colonel Gevaerts needed about as much building-up as Boulder Dam, but Kappie took his unspoken sympathy gratefully. They were ancient cronies from away back, long before Micaela had swum into the Inspector's bemused ken. Moreover, Gevaerts was not married and therefore doubly welcome just now. They sat talking for a while about this and that—anything except women—and then Gevaerts suddenly straightened up.

"Eh?" he rumbled. "Look who comes! Jan—and in a hurry."

The inestimable Sergeant Jan, Kappie's right-hand-man and factotum, was indeed advancing down the Leidenstraat. In these exciting times his normally slow, deliberate movements were a relief, almost, to the inspector; but now he was definitely flying, for him.

He had a paper in his hand and stopped on the sidewalk beneath the verandah, saluting.

"Mynheer, urgent!" he said.

Kappie took the missive and scanned it. A frown appeared on his seamed forehead. He passed the paper to the colonel, and heaved himself out of his chair.

"We had better go," he said in matter-of-fact tones. "It may be only another of these very-damned alarms, but—"

It was the consensus of opinion among

the gin-swillers that Kappie De Vries was a gentleman whose family life would, in the immediate future, be very well worth watching indeed.

II

BUT Kappie and his military friend were thinking about other things as they swung along together that hot noon.

The message had been from Makassar's citadel, where a very high and portly authority had been recently installed by the Batavia government. His name was Van Vliet, and in Kappie's book he was down as a perfect specimen of the stuffed shirt; but he was in charge of affairs in the big island of Celebes, and had to be taken accordingly.

He was sitting behind a magnificent desk in the citadel, looking perturbed and fingering his group of chins. Paul Engels, the Port-captain was with him, and also another person in a naval uniform. Kappie's eyes opened wide at sight of him, and something like a grin flicked at his iron mouth. He had seen that trim white outfit before.

Administrator Van Vliet beckoned them. "Come in, mynheers, come in!" he said fretfully. "I introduce to you Lieutenant-Commander Cassidy of the United States Navy. He has certain matters to put before you—"

Pete Cassidy seemed, to Kappie at any rate, absurdly young to hold the rank he did in any man's fleet—a red-haired, ruddy-complexioned youngster with a fighting chin and smile. He shook hands with the newcomers and dropped into a chair again, waiting for Van Vliet to speak. The administrator appeared to be hesitating, however, and when he gave tongue it was dubiously, without enthusiasm.

"Mynheer Cassidy—and his superiors—are a little nervous, it seems, gentlemen," he began. "They have been seeing things. That is so, Mynheer, eh?"

The smile had vanished from Pete Cassidy's face, and he looked a trifle annoyed, for there was an edge to the administrator's voice.

"Yes," he said curtly. "That's so, if you care to put it as bluntly as that, Mynheer. We've certainly seen things—I saw 'em myself, as a matter of fact—and it seemed to us that you ought to know about 'em. That's why I'm here."

He broke off short, and Kappie, looking at him, thought it was maybe just as well that he did. Another instant, and Lieutenant Commander Cassidy, U. S. N., might very nicely have compromised his career by being rude to a stuffed-shirt Dutchman. He hastened to take a hand himself.

"*Ja,* Mynheer," he said soothingly. "And what was it you saw?"

Pete Cassidy's grin returned, fleetingly; he was in reality a very good-humored young man, and he somehow gathered that Kappie and the others present might have their troubles with the administrator, as well.

"Well," he replied, "it's not so easy to be dead certain about these things, as Captain Engels here can probably tell you. But there was something two nights ago, up in the Straits here, that looked mighty queer to me. It wasn't only me, either—my officer of the watch saw it, and a couple of ratings as well. It wasn't a hundred yards away when it surfaced—"

"A submarine?" Engels queried sharply. "Here, in the Straits? One of ours, maybe—or it might be British, from Singapore, or even Japanese. I have seen them in these waters."

Pete Cassidy shook his head. "I'm afraid you're wrong, sir," he said. "This fellow wasn't British, or Dutch, or Jap either. I saw his conning-tower plainly, before he spotted us and crash-dived in a hurry. He was one of their new UZ class, not a doubt of it."

There was a silence, and then Engels swore with a sailor's fluency and point. "Impossible!" he rasped. "Ten thousand miles away from home? Mynheer, you were mistaken—"

"Maybe," said Pete Cassidy. "But if I was, then at least twenty other people were. I didn't tell you, but the ship astern of us saw him as well. We were anchored, both of us, or he'd never have come up at all, I guess. Anyway, he crash-dived, all standing, directly he spotted us. I'd say that was pretty fair corroborative evidence, wouldn't you?"

Engels frowned, and the administrator fidgeted. "Then you think," he queried, "that we have German submarines in these waters? Ten thousand miles from home, as you say. That is absurd, mynheer. Where would he obtain oil and supplies?"

THE four service men looked at each other with silent sympathy. They had all of them, it seemed, had to deal with this type of civilian before. It was Kappie who spoke first.

"Our own ships," he muttered. "And the Australian traffic for Singapore—"

"The cruisers know," said Pete hastily. "They're onto the business all right. But it seemed to us we'd better report ashore and let you gentlemen swing into action.

There's a base around some place, of course."

"A base?" It came from the administrator. "Do you wish to tell me, mynheer, that someone maintains an oil-depot for German U-boats, here in the Indies?"

Engels answered instantly. "What else, excellency? There is no other possibility. The commander here is right—it is a matter for us ashore here, and at once. Not so, Inspector?"

Kappie nodded grimly. He had been fingering his chin thoughtfully, with a far-away expression as if his mind was elsewhere. Of the administrator he had taken no notice whatsoever.

"Ja!" he said, rising. "It is as you say, Engels. Somebody is being funny, almighty, hereabouts, and it is our task, and immediately, to discover who it is. I have your permission to leave, excellency—there are matters to put in hand—"

Administrator Van Vliet was still swelling like a turkey-cock with indignation. "I do not believe it," he kept on repeating. "They cannot do such things here—"

Kappie, Gevaerts, and Engels found themselves outside, with Pete Cassidy for company. Pete was grinning again.

"You've got 'em too, I see," he said. "I guess they turn up, most places. Well, I'll be getting along, mynheers; pleased to have met you, and good luck in hunting out these fellows."

Kappie clapped him on the shoulder. *"Na, na!"* he said heartily. "You will come with us for a moment, in any event, Commander. A little drink now, to take the taste of—somebody—out of our mouths!"

They were moving away from the citadel with its ancient brick bastions and outdated fortifications, when there was a hail behind them. An aide came tearing down the steps.

"Mynheers," he gasped, "you are required again. The administrator—"

Mynheer Van Vliet was still behind his great desk, but he was standing erect now, and his plump face was ashen. He was staring at a radio flimsy that had just been handed him by a scared messenger.

"The *Utrecht!*" he gasped. "Torpedoed—"

Paul Engels almost snatched the flimsy from him and skimmed it over. The wireless was from one of the Dutchmen's prize merchantmen — a twelve-thousand-ton, Diesel-engined, streamlined beauty that had escaped the European holocaust just in time to become the glory of their shipping in the East.

And she was a hundred miles away, in the jaws of Makassar Strait—down by the head and sinking fast.

"Allejezus!" gasped little Engels, and fled away to the harbor.

Kappie glanced at Gevaerts, and then at Pete Cassidy. *"Ja!"* he said. "It waits a while, or little drink, mynheers. There are some other matters to be attended to first."

III

IN THAT statement Kappie was essentially correct—but the matters were perhaps not entirely as he had imagined them to be.

Looking for submarine bases, or submarine mother-ships, among the myriad islands and inlets of the Dutch Indies was an impossible sort of a task, even for the methodical Hollanders. They admitted as much—Engels and the tough navy men—after a week's intensive combing of coastlines and archipelagos, with every craft and plane they could put in commission. It was not for want of trying with them, anyway.

But of the *Utrecht's* assailant there was no sign—for five days. Then, and not thirty miles from where she lay on the bottom, and in the early dawn, another fat freighter took it amidships and went to join her. This time there wasn't any doubt who it was; the freighter's crew, tumbling into their boats, saw the UZ number plain.

The Indies hummed, the governor up at Batavia said things, like the fine old warrior he was, and Administrator Van Vliet

turned pale. But Kappie De Vries was not pale; he was just then in the fifth day of a battle-royal with Micaela, to add to his official worries. He was crimson in the face most of his time, and snorting.

Because Micaela had flown the black

flag, revolted, gone Dyak on him. She was deliberately, it seemed, out to see how close she could drive the inspector to apoplexy. And—in company with Mr. Bertram Green—making a very nice job of it, at that.

Kappie's home had suddenly turned from an abode of peace and comfort to a little hell. That was bad, but what was infinitely worse, Kappie himself was being beaten, and at his own game. The game of wills, of imposing oneself and one's personality on others.

"Listen to me, Madame—" he had begun his usual diatribe, a dozen times, and lo, it had gone flat on him. Micaela simply hadn't listened; or worse, she had been sweetly reasonable and explanatory.

"A lady has a right to her friends in these days, Mynheer," she had said.

Kappie described the friend in question in terms to make a turtle blush, and Micaela stared at him.

"So?" she said. "You do not trust me, eh, Mynheer?"

Now that was a point-blank charge, double-shotted and blasting, and Kappie took it between wind and water, as it were. He gulped, choked, and went away from there in a hurry, to seek solace in work, drink, and devising ingenious methods of finishing Mr. Bertram Green, philanderer, of London, England.

Mr. Green, on the other hand, throve exceedingly. He was, as Makassar's menfolk had sized him up, a thoroughly nasty little reptile, with his cane and his silk suits and bright handkerchiefs and pretty-boy manners. Moreover, he was excellently heeled financially, the bank said, and he knew what to do with his money.

Mr. Green's parties, at the hotel or out at the country-club, were something to remember.

The fact that they were ninety per cent women didn't get them any the less talked about—or please the husbands, fathers, and fiancés of Makassar a whit the better. Not that there was anything in particular they could do about it. Mr. Green had started something, among the ladies, that was very much like a revolution. And of all people, Micaela De Vries was his chief aide and abettor.

Kappie met him on the street one day and stopped.

"Mynheer," he said dangerously, "a word with you—"

Green twirled his cane. "Certainly, Inspector," he replied. "Something on your mind, by any chance?"

Kappie held himself in with an effort that nearly killed him. *"Ja!"* he said. "There is something on my mind, Mynheer. You are playing with fire, you hear me?"

His voice was shaking with pure rage, but it seemed to have little effect on Mr. Green. He merely shrugged in his ineffable, elegant fashion.

"My dear chap!" he exclaimed. "I don't know what you mean. Be a little plainer, won't you?"

That was just what Kappie De Vries could not do—without as good as bringing charges against Micaela and half the *mevrouws* of Makassar—and Kappie knew that Mr. Green knew it. He felt, for positively the first time in his career, baffled; he didn't in hell know what to do about it.

So he departed from there, fuming, and Mr. Green went on his way, attired like

the lilies of the field and apparently unconscious of the furious eyes that followed him. He entered the hotel and went up to his suite; it was the best Makassar could afford, for Mr. Green certainly knew how to get himself service. He was smiling a little as he dropped into a wicker chair and took up the paper.

THERE was plenty of stuff there to seize the attention, for even the stolid Dutchmen had taken to scare headlines in these days. Communiques were there, cautious or arrogant, leading articles, and a whole raft of speculative stuff on the submarine. Mr. Green flicked an amused eye over the lot of it, and turned to the back page.

There in small type, between advertisements of shoes and soap, he found something to interest him. For a while he did some figuring on the back of an old envelope with a silver pencil.

Then he burnt the envelope, carefully, and disposed of its ashes in the private bathroom. With a glance at his watch, he strolled out again, and down to the cable office, where he sent a perfectly open and above-board wire to a man in Osaka. Fifteen minutes later he was taking tea with Micaela De Vries and another intensely interested young woman, right in the sanctity of Kappie De Vries' own living-room.

But Kappie was otherwise engaged just then. He had gone stamping and parading back to the office, in a blinding state of suppressed fury, and found Sergeant Jan methodically tabulating agents' reports, with a huge chart of the Celebes coasts before him. He had it all divided off into squares, and was going over them one by one, with the expression of a wooden idol. Kappie glowered at him.

"Well?" he growled. "There is anything, no?"

Jan shook his head. "Nothing, Mynheer," he replied. "It is all as usual, thus far—"

Kappie swore. "Almighty, it would be!" he muttered, and then, as his thoughts got the better of him, "Jan," he said curtly, "here is something you must do for me. A private matter, you comprehend. There is a certain Mynheer Green—"

Jan had laid down his pencil, and was looking more than usually unintelligent. He knew all about the Green affair, and he had been torn for days between loyalty to Kappie and a quite genuine affection for Micaela. It was a *vervloekt,* silly business, Jan held, all of it.

He rose, therefore, saluted, and prepared to take orders. *"Ja,* Mynheer?" he said. Kappie squinted at him.

"I wish to have this Green looked into," he said slowly. "All of him—where he comes from, what he does, where he goes, who he is. Privately, Jan, you understand. There is nothing to appear on the files."

"Understood, Mynheer!" Jan closed his notebook, with a face like the sphinx. He had never, in all his dealings with Kappie, seen anything quite like this. Kappie's private and official lives were—had always been—as distinct and far apart as the poles.

Somebody knocked at the office door. Kappie called to enter, and a man put his face in; it was Lieutenant-Commander Pete Cassidy, U.S.N., and he was dead serious. More than a little mad, too.

"Look," he said without ceremony, "I don't know what kind of an outfit you got around here, Inspector, but that fat guy up at the citadel's crazy. I'm wondering if you've got any sense—"

Kappie had snapped out of his irritation. He waved Pete to a chair. "What is it?" he said soothingly. "Something has happened, no?"

Pete nodded. "Sure it's happened. I heard that sucker's engines myself last night, not twenty miles up the coast there. We'd the hydrophones going, just on the chance."

Kappie leaned forward, with the hint of a grin. *"Ja,"* he said. "And you reported to the administrator?"

"Captain Engels did," Pete said. "He wants action—and he got the bird. This

Van Vliet don't like Americans, it seems. He as good as said I was pulling a fast one, the so-and-so! I thought maybe you could get something moving. Engels and the navy boys are throwing fits, right this minute."

Kappie scratched his head thoughtfully. "I do not know, he said after a moment. "This animal up yonder has much authority. It is difficult—"

The phone rang. Kappie picked it up, and listened with a curious tense expression growing on his leathery countenance. Then he put the receiver down.

"Well," he said quietly, "you were right, Mynheer, the American. He was there, to be sure, last night. And this morning he had a little more amusement. This time it is two he put down—and what, Mynheer, do you think about that?"

IV

WHATEVER Lieutenant-Commander Cassidy may have thought about it, the Dutchmen went him several better, both inwardly and from the standpoint of expression.

A howl went up from the Indies—a howl that could have been heard across on the Asiatic mainland and further. Somebody was pulling some funny business, right here in the midst of their preparedness and all their warlike preparation. Somebody was hitting them where it hurt, in their seaborne trade—and this time it wasn't the little brown men from Tokio either.

It was somebody who had the hell of a nerve, said the Dutchmen wrathfully. It had better be put a stop to, and a deal faster than somewhat—

Thus said the press and the stout merchants and the topers on the club verandah there and public opinion generally. But in official quarters it was different. They said nothing for publication about it, but they worked like grim, sulphurously expressive beavers.

And got precisely nowhere. Paul Engels summed it all up in one sizzling phrase.

"Very-damned black magic!" he exploded in Kappie's office. "The devil himself is in the business!"

Kappie grinned. "No," he said. "It is not the devil, Paul. But it is some clever *schellums,* to be sure. They will need finding—"

"We shall never find them," Engels mourned. Kappie sniffed.

"That is all you know, Paul," he remarked tartly. "I have never been beaten yet—by ordinary people," he added under his breath. "There are some, nevertheless, it is impossible to understand."

If Engels heard him, he showed no sign of it. Kappie's personal trouble was more or less common property by now, but it was worth anybody's life to try and discuss it with him.

Gevaerts, the fiery colonel of native irregulars, was the only one that did.

"I would break that little scamp's neck for him," he advised. "No man should make a laughing-stock out of me—"

Kappie glared. "I have not seen anyone laugh," he stated. "They had better not, my friend. As for this Green, you do not see the difficulty. If I deal with him seriously, as you suggest, what does it make of Micaela? Tell me that!"

Gevaerts admitted the apparent truth of

this, and subsided. Not for the first time he was thanking a kindly Heaven that marriage was an ambush he had so far triumphantly avoided. It was an unblessed state, he ever held.

He said so, with embroideries, to Pete Cassidy, also much unwed. Pete chuckled.

"All the same, I wouldn't care to insure the guy's life," he observed. "De Vries'll wake up to what's going on one day, and then there'll be fireworks."

Colonel Gevaerts stiffened. "Mynheer," he queried softly, "do you by any chance hint that there is anything going on? I have the honor to be acquainted with Mevrouw De Vries—"

There was suppressed earthquake in his manner, and Pete Cassidy made haste to disown any improper ideas. He figured, all the same, that a time would come when Mr. Bertram Green would very bitterly rue the day he ever clapped eyes on that lively, lovely lady, Micaela De Vries.

MR. GREEN himself, however, seemed to have no such fears.

His parties were gayer than ever, and Micaela grew more and more into a sort of permanent hostess for them. They took place with increasing frequency, and in a variety of places—the country-club, and even further afield. It was a familiar spectacle to see him, in his big touring car, with half-a-dozen ladies piled into it, driving out along the coast road or up into the hills—

Kappie even came across a rough little chart of the country round Makassar, made out by his wife.

She was out at the time, and it was lying on her writing-desk. The inspector took it up and scanned it, at first with enormous disgust, and then with a sort of interest. It was an unskilful, amateur piece of work, as if Micaela had done it absent-mindedly. There were a number of crosses on it, with scribbled dates by them.

Kappie blinked. "In God's name!" he said, and put the thing aside. It seemed to him the height of female idiocy to keep a record of these crazy parties—

HE EVEN told Micaela so, when she returned, sunburnt and unrepentant. She nodded, maddeningly.

"Beyond doubt," she said. "A ridiculous affair, Mynheer, is it not?"

They were not on good terms, by any stretch of imagination, Kappie and his lady wife. Nevertheless, Kappie stared.

"Micaela—" he began in a puzzled tone.

But Micaela had gone. With her pretty nose in the air she had taken a walk-out on him, and Kappie De Vries was left gaping alternately at the door, and the scrap of paper lying on the table.

It was a full minute before he turned on his heel and went away. The expression on his crimson face would have made a comic illustrator's fortune.

Micaela peeped at his broad back from the window. She was oddly different in appearance to what she had been a few minutes since. In fact, an observer would have been hard put to it to describe the queer look of her mouth and eyes. She stamped her foot suddenly and said something under her breath—something violent and unmatronly. Then she relaxed, and taking up the little piece of paper she began to study it intently, a frown wrinkling her smooth brow.

She was still pondering when there was another footstep on the path outside. Mr. Bertram Green was approaching, a much-beribboned box under his arm, and the light of conquest in his eye. Micaela took a single glance at him, thrust the paper into a drawer, and poked her head into the kitchen.

"Trudi," she whispered to her gigantic maid-of-all-work, "visitors! Remember!"

Trudi, who resembled a female edition of Sergeant Jan, was even less of a fool than that astute non-com. She merely nodded and went on with her cleaning and polishing. As a dragon, duenna, or Mrs. Grundy, Trudi had her points, and she

knew it. She was still smiling to herself when Micaela let Mr. Green in.

He was quite at his ease—a great deal too much so, Micaela suspected, as he handed her the box.

"Try these," he said. "You'll find them pretty fair, I shouldn't be surprised. They ought to be—I got 'em sent down from Batavia."

Micaela beamed, as she removed the gay wrapper and discovered a two-kilo assortment of imported chocolates. In wartime, such things were becoming unknown in Makassar's stores, and the good ladies of the town missed them damnably. Micaela cooed ever so prettily, and Mr. Green sat down on the couch at her side.

"Beautiful—" he began.

Next instant he was struck speechless by an extraordinary noise off, as it were. Trudi had only coughed, but the effect upon Mr. Green was as though someone had smitten him with a hammer. He recoiled to the far end of the couch, and Micaela contemplated him with innocent, dovelike eyes.

"You were saying, Mynheer—" she queried.

Mr. Green drew out his pastel-shaded bandanna and mopped his brow a little. "I was saying it's a beautiful evening," he managed to achieve as he caught a glimpse of Trudi's moonlight contenance behind the kitchen door. "A—a lovely evening."

Micaela's innocent look deepened.

"Are you sure, Mynheer," she asked tantalizingly, "that that was really what you wished to say?"

Trudi's wide mouth tightened a little at this sally, but only for an instant. It relaxed again then and she turned her face away to hide a glimmer of unholy mirth. Mr. Green found his boldness returning.

"Matter of fact it wasn't," he confessed. "You are beautiful, you know. You're thrown away on that policeman of yours, aren't you?"

He was edging closer again, and Micaela sighed. It was a most artistic little exhalation, full of nameless regret, almost of heartbreak.

"You must not say such things to me," she whispered. "Kappie is—"

She broke off, looking down at her lap. Mr. Green took the bull by the horns. "You could do something about that," he said in a whisper. "If you wanted to."

"I know," Micaela replied in the same tone. "It is difficult, but maybe—" She got up abruptly, before Mr. Green had time to take any further action. He was sitting there looking at her like a codfish. "That is enough, for now," she went on with a return to her old mischievous manner. "You are very pleasant, Mynheer, and a woman finds you hard to resist, to be sure. But not here, no—"

She fended him off, and gestured towards Trudi and the kitchen. Mr. Green made a few earnest passes, and gave it up; but his eyes were bright, and his hands unsteady, and he was quite, quite assured of his victory. Micaela gave him a smile that would have corrupted a saint.

"Let us talk about parties," she suggested. "I would like to plan one in a new place—"

MR. BERTRAM GREEN returned to his hotel suite in considerable of a state of mind.

His campaign against Micaela had been proceeding like clockwork, and he had been getting somewhere towards his major objective—which wasn't, to be sure, what popular fancy made it out to be. It was not Kappie De Vries' wife Mr. Green was after right now. It was Kappie himself and the secrets of his office. He had been told quite a number of them already by the incautious, amiable Micaela, to be sure—

But now, somehow or other, he had had a shock. He had found himself maneuvered into throwing another party, which was strictly all right with him—but Micaela had insisted that the celebration take place in a certain spot. She had been almost tearful about it, in fact. And Mr.

Green found himself half-wondering why.

Because he didn't see himself escorting a bunch of gabby females to that spot, or anywhere in its immediate vicinity. He had his reasons, this Mr. Green, ostensibly of London, England.

He entered the hotel, lost in thought, and a certain party—a party in a duffle-colored coolie's garb—slunk down a side-street and headed unobtrusively for police headquarters. There he had words with Sergeant Jan, and the Sergeant jumped a little.

"You are sure, Ali?" he growled.

Ali said he was quite sure, which he might well have been, having been upon Mr. Green's trail all afternoon. Sergeant Jan heaved a mighty sigh and pulled himself together.

"Very good," he said, half-aloud. "But Almighty, there comes trouble—"

And he entered the inner sanctum, not without a trace of nervousness.

Kappie De Vries was sitting there, behind the desk, with a frown like Lucifer's upon his brow. The frown was one of concentrated thought, mostly, for Mr. Green was not the only puzzled gentleman just then. Kappie was trying to figure out Micaela still and doing badly at the task.

But at Jan's tidings, communicated in a slightly hesitant undertone, a change came over him. He went a dead, pasty white, gripping the desk edge.

"Send Ali to me," he grated. And when Ali had come and gone, Kappie De Vries shuddered. He reached suddenly into a drawer and came out with a snub-nosed, blue automatic in his hand.

"I am going out," he said to Jan in a strained whisper. "Do you take charge here—"

He made for the door, but never reached it. Sergeant Jan was normally the best-disciplined non-com in the Indies or out of them, but this was once where discipline went to the winds. Jan caught his superior by the shoulder and whirled him around.

"No!" he gasped—and when Kappie tried to tear himself free, he wrestled with him, there in the inspector's own office, a spectacle for gods and men. Colonel Gevaerts, entering headquarters in a hurry, stood transfixed.

"Ten million devils!" he said. "What is this?"

KAPPIE wrenched himself out of Jan's grip. "Out of my way!" he bellowed. "You hear me, Franz—I am about to finish this affair, once and for all."

Gevaerts stayed where he was, a tall figure in the doorway. His immense nose cocked itself at a truculent angle.

"Be still!" he said. "This is very-damned foolishness, Kappie. What are you—a ten-year-old child? Or maybe you have been to the cinema, eh? Put down that gun this instant and talk sense! If you try and pass me, my friend, you regret it, I give you my word."

The Colonel was a jungle-fighter of ancient renown, and there was a look in his eye that might have given the boldest pause. Besides, he was Kappie's oldest crony around the Indies. Kappie flung the gun down with a curse and dropped back into his chair again.

"Damnation!" he said weakly.

Gevaerts put Jan out of the room and locked the door.

"Now," he said, "let us hear all about this."

Kappie told him—the whole works, from his point of view. "And then," he concluded, "what do I find? I find that she passes the afternoon, in my own house, with that slimy fellow!"

Gevaerts was massaging his nose. He looked at Kappie down it. "Alone?" he queried sharply.

Kappie grimaced all at once, as if somebody had driven a pin into him. "I—I—" he stammered. "Almighty, I do not know, Franz. I did not think—"

"Then think now," said Gevaerts, "and find out. She has a maid, I believe. See if she was there.

Kappie howled for Jan again, and a couple of questions decided that point. The inspector looked extremely foolish for a moment, and then recovered himself.

"*Ja!*" he said. "But for all that, she was entertaining the little animal."

"I am wondering about that," said Gevaerts. "Kappie, there is some very queer business here. I know your wife, and—this is not like her. I am wondering—Listen," his voice jumped a little, "this *schellum* Green—you have been having inquiries made about him, no doubt. What is known, eh?"

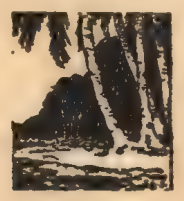
Kappie drew a key out of his pocket and unlocked his private safe. From it he took a file of papers and regarded them gloomily.

"There is not a thing here," he said. "Not a damned thing to lay hold on. He is English, the bank here checked him with its London agents, his papers are in order. Only—he is wrong; I am sure of it, Franz, leaving Micaela aside for the moment. And you too think so, eh?"

Gevaerts nodded. "Almighty, yes!" he rumbled. "Where does the rat get his money? He has plenty, it seems."

"American oil," said Kappie. "In drafts from New York. As lawful as—marriage. Except for this business with the women, he is innocent as a baby. It is all very difficult—"

MR. GREEN was also finding it very difficult just then, and he did not look so innocent as all that, either.



He was in his rooms at the hotel, doing a good deal of remarkably competent swearing to himself. In his mind's eye he had a certain picture—a map of the Celebes shore. And he was fluently regretting that he had ever been inveigled, by a silly woman, into this party business.

Because, now, he was booked to take them to a place called the Tiger's Throat, and that wouldn't do at all.

Not by a very great deal—and yet, Mr. Green discovered it was going to be difficult, sliding out of it. He wanted, quite desperately and for several reasons, to keep in with Micaela De Vries. But she had been disconcertingly short with him, and more than short, when he had suggested somewhere else for the jamboree.

It was odd, anyway, and however you looked at it, that she should have insisted on the Tiger's Throat.

To begin with, it was thirty miles away up-coast—a wild, forest-covered spot, full of sea-creeks and marshes. The famed upas-tree flourished there, word had it, and there were certainly crocodiles and snakes in its romantic depths. Mr. Green had mentioned the crocodiles and snakes, but it seemed that these Dutch *mevrouws* didn't give a hoot for such matters. It was, according to Micaela, the Tiger's Throat, or nothing.

So Mr. Green was perturbed. He reached for the telephone, and put it down again in a hurry. This was a kind of affair when the less use telephones had the better. He took his hat and strolled out on to the Leidenstraat—as undramatic a little body as ever wasn't, by a jugful, what he seemed. The Malay doorkeeper touched his brow to him, and the manager smiled. Mr. Bertram Green of London walked abroad in the warm evening—for his health's sake, to be sure.

But ten minutes later, in the main street of the bazar, Mr. Green passed a party in a red turban and a straggly black beard. Mr. Green was fingering his neat cravat, and the bearded person nodded infinitesimally. Another five minutes and they were facing each other across a mat in a hole-in-the-wall store, haggling over a carpet.

The trouble was, from the point of view

of Kappie's spy Ali, that the place was so lamentably public. It was impossible to hear a word that was said, but after a short interval Mr. Green rose, with the carpet under his arm. Money passed, and the red turban bowed an almost affectionate salaam. Mr. Green returned hotelwards, whistling carelessly.

That was where he spilt his milk, because Ali was a bit of a psychologist as well as a number one spy. That deal in carpets had been a lot too rapid to be genuine, he held, and Mr. Green's melodious whistling was all wrong, too. White *tuans* don't whistle on the streets in the East, unless their minds are elsewhere.

Ali took a single look at Mr. Green's retreating back, and dropped him in a hurry. The red turban had become the center of his interest.

The next half-hour was a long and unobtrusive wait, but then the carpet-merchant, whose name was Abdullah, it seemed, rolled up his goods and closed the shop for the night. Ali let him get fifty yards start, and followed him quietly among the rabbit-warren intricacies of the bazar. He figured that somehow, some place, he was going to have to report his switch to Sergeant Jan.

That was where he, too, erred. Red-turbaned Abdullah the carpet-seller dived suddenly into an open doorway off an alley. It was a house Ali knew well, and there was little good in the knowledge. Walk past the door, said Ali to himself, and then get help. That isn't any house to enter single-handed—

And that, strictly, was the last thing Ali remembered. The big red-turbaned man had been lurking for him just inside that dark oblong. He leaned out and cracked Ali over the skull with a pistol-butt, from behind, and like lightning. Then he dragged him inside by the heels, using a single yank of his powerful hands. They were remarkable hands, at that—one of their curiosities was that on the left little finger, the half-moon at the nail's base was white instead of brown. Few persons called Abdullah display a feature such as that.

Just as few Abdullahs growl what this one did, under his breath; or go out of there in a hurry, cursing in good, round, frantic high German.

VI

KAPPIE DE VRIES returned home late that night—very late. It was gone midnight before he left his office in police headquarters, and neither he nor Gevaerts were a whit more comfortable than they had been hours earlier.

"Something is queer," was the burden of Gevaerts' song, and Kappie merely grunted by way of reply. It was all he was capable of, in his present mood.

They moved through the empty street, past the offices of the paper, where the presses were already hammering out the morning's screaming headlines. From the naval dockyard came the clank of hammers, a searchlight shot inquiringly into the sky, and there was the faint sound of engines aloft. Gevaerts stopped at the corner of Kappie's shady street.

"Go home and to bed," he said gruffly. "Forget all this business until the morning—"

Kappie watched his tall figure striding away in the moonlight. There was something comforting, after all, in this animal Gevaerts. Kappie confessed that for the last week he had been needing comfort, badly.

He let himself into the bungalow silently. Micaela was asleep, with the moonlight striking on her through the window; from the other room came the even unceasing reverberation of Trudi's snores. Kappie stood in the dark living room, looking about him gloomily. Then he groped his way to the buffet, mixed a drink, and sat down in a deep chair with it, plunged in thought.

Matters had indeed gone sour with Kappie De Vries when they kept him from his sleep. But he was baffled, and somehow more worried than ever in his life before; even good liquor failed to give him a solution to the mystery of his wife's carryings-on.

How long he had been there, sitting immobile and brooding, he did not know. But all at once, amid the myriad tiny noises of the night, he heard a thing.

Like most of his calling, Kappie had a sort of sixth or seventh sense in his make-up—a subconscious alarm-bell, that tinkled now and again when untoward sights or sounds or smells impinged on it. It had come into action in all manner of queer, tight places—and it was suddenly jangling furiously now.

Kappie sat quiet still, and wide awake. For a full minute there was nothing, except Micaela's regular breathing and Trudi's snores with the undertone of the cicadas in the trees. A crawling sensation took possession of Kappie's spine. He thought about his gun, the little .38 across in the drawer there. He did not move.

There was somebody outside the house. Kappie's ordinary ears hadn't heard it, his everyday senses were numb—but he was tingling now from head to foot. The person, whoever it was, was outside the bedroom window; the open window. Kappie even thought he could hear their breathing now, across the other sounds. . . .

He gathered himself together, the big muscles rippling and bunching under his clothes. Kappie De Vries was forty-eight years old, when most men begin to grow flabby and toneless; he weighed two hundred pounds and more, and his diet was a scandal. But he was still, on occasion, the human thunderbolt he had been twenty years ago, when he had begun to show the Indies the kind of Dutchman he was.

Now, there was a head over the window- sill. It was a round head, like a ball, and Kappie couldn't see the face. Not that he wanted to; he knew what its body was like. Knew that it had a knife, and not any wavy, old-fashioned Malay *kris* either. This was an artist.

WELL, Kappie was an artist, too. He could move like a wraith, and like a flash, when he needed, and he needed now. He was out of the chair and through the door and round the house, cat-footed, before ever the visitor heard him. There was a scuffle, a throttled gurgle, and a heavy thud. Kappie stood erect, panting—

A figure materialized at the foot of the garden, a figure in a tremendous hurry. It came flying up the path, eyes bulging, a service automatic in its fist.

"Mynheer"—it gasped.

Kappie held up a finger, and then clapped it to his lips. There was a glitter in his eye now—the old look, and he stooped over the man on the ground. Like a bundle of old clothes he lifted him, and tip-toe, stealthily retired towards the road, the astonished Jan at his heels. Inside the house, Micaela stirred a little in her sleep, and Trudi snored on.

Kappie glanced at Jan. "Well?" he demanded. "And what are you doing here, might one ask? You should be abed, my friend!"

Jan was still panting with his run. "Mynheer," he contrived to get out, "I had a notion—"

Kappie pulled a comic face. Like himself, Jan possessed queer extra senses, and in his case there was something definitely fey, spooky almost, at times. Jan's "notions" had a disconcerting habit of turning into act. He bent over the assassin.

"You know this one?" he inquired. "A *daku,* eh?"

Jan knelt down. "*Ja,* Mynheer," he replied. "A *daku*—but I do not think he is ordinary. No *daku* would try and knife madame—unless he was sent—" He scratched his head. "I am wondering—" he continued.

"Yes?" said Kappie. "You are wondering who sent him, and why. I am about to

find out, Jan. Almighty, I believe I have something at last! Listen to me—"

He spoke for a few minutes in a hurried whisper, and Jan punctuated the discourse with nods. At its conclusion he permitted himself a most undisciplined chuckle.

"Good, myheer!" he exclaimed. "I have been troubled for you a little, in these days. But a small lesson, maybe, will have effect. Only, it is well to be careful."

"I will be careful," said Kappie grimly. "And now, see that this fellow is removed. And in the morning, send me Ali; I have work for him."

He slipped back to the house, and Jan went about his grisly business of disposing of the knife-man. He was quite dead—Kappie had made no mistake about that—and within the hour the morgue had him. Sergeant Jan had a drag with that institution, and the dacoit was as much out of circulation as if he had been buried ten feet deep in the cemetery. Jan went back to headquarters at three in the morning, chuckling.

He was thinking about the married life of Kappie De Vries, and the little lesson about to be administered to Micaela.

Within the hour, though, he was not chuckling any more—much. There was no news of Ali, through any of the curious channels Jan sought it. He had been seen in the bazar, apparently on the trail of Mr. Green; but from that time on, in the early evening, he had vanished. Jan's face was grave as he pursued his investigations, and as the dawn came in it was graver still.

He spoke to the itinerant sherbet-seller who had been the last to contact his pet spy, but the man merely shrugged. Jan put on his cap, looked to his pistol, and went marching down the still sleeping bazar.

He found the shuttered store in which the red-turbaned man had carried on his trade in carpets, unemotionally picked the lock, and went inside.

When he came out, he was in a hurry again—a very considerable hurry. He made for Kappie's bungalow to begin with, but stopped abruptly, shaking his head. Then he turned and hastened to the military barracks, where Colonel Gevaerts was just taking an early morning cup of coffee as an eye-opener.

The colonel surveyed him with distaste. "Go away," he commanded. "Almighty, it is the middle of the night!"

Jan saluted, and produced an article out of his pocket. "Look, Mynheer Colonel," he said. "What is this, think you?"

Gevaerts took the object and turned it over in his hand. It was a button—an ornamental little affair of black and silver, with a familiar, a too-familiar hooked cross on it. The colonel stared.

"Where," he enquired sharply, "did you get this?"

Jan told him, with a brief report of the night's events. Gevaerts' eyebrows went up.

"So?" he exclaimed. "But why bring it to me, Jan? This is a matter for the inspector—"

SERGEANT JAN, delicately, explained why he wished to steer clear of the inspector's quarters just then, and Gevaerts, after another stare, exploded into a roar of laughter.

"I see," he gasped, slapping his leg. "I certainly see— You are a couple of *schellums,* you and the inspector, to *verneuk* a lady so. You are ashamed, are you not?"

Jan looked at him. "It is necessary, Mynheer," he said solemnly, and the colonel roared again.

"In God's name!" he protested. "I have never heard of such a thing. A little lesson, eh? But it is necessary, as you say, or *wat drommel!* they run away with us, these women— And now," he tugged his mustache, "let us see what is to be done about this. Something, and quickly."

He went into his office, across the parade-ground, and put in a swift telephone call. Paul Engels of the navy's port com-

mand was of the same opinion, after colloquy.

In fact, he was almost hysterical with excitement, and was for instant measures with everything Makassar's sea-borne forces could muster. Gevaerts had difficulty in quieting him down.

"Na, na!" he said over the wire. "Do not spoil it, Paul. Later, maybe— Or, wait!" A sudden idea struck him. "That American—what is his name?—would he not cooperate? Those devils will not suspect him—"

There was a click at the other end of the line. Colonel Gevaerts laid down the telephone, looked at Jan again, and began to laugh in earnest.

"Goedverdom!" he insisted. "I never heard of such a business in all my life—"

VII

AROUND mid-morning, under the bright tropical sun, a number of things were happening almost simultaneously in Makassar.

Mr. Bertram Green, in the hotel, was pacing up and down his floor, biting his nails and frowning. He had just received a message from Micaela De Vries about the Tiger's Throat party, and that was a startler, to be sure. The news he had expected to receive of Kappie's wife was of a different nature altogether.

Micaela was watching Kappie go off to work, with the same queer, strained look on her face as before. The household that morning had been a doleful one, with Kappie in his most sarcastic, shortest mood. He had merely grunted when Micaela informed him of the Tiger's Throat affair, and swung away down the path without even looking back. Micaela was not so very far off tears when Trudi the maid put her head in the door.

"Someone break the flowers," she said indignantly.

Micaela went to inspect, and remained to wonder, drumming her fingers speculatively. She knew the signs, all right, there in that flower-bed under her window. Something had been going on there, and Kappie had been concerned in it—

"It is nothing, Trudi," she said. "Dogs, or the monkeys maybe."

In the house she stood looking at the telephone that connected her with Kappie, for a long while. She was just the least mite scared, all at once, and her big inspector seemed a very desirable party indeed, just at that instant.

And down in the harbor, a United States destroyer slipped its moorings, and ghosted out into the fairway. Lieutenant-commander Pete Cassidy was on the bridge, and he was grinning faintly to himself as at a thought.

He was wondering just how close this little morning spin of thirty miles or so might come to an act of belligerency, if Washington ever knew the truth of it.

"All right," he said to his puzzled executive. "Keep her as she goes—"

And somewhere, in a suffocating darkness, Ali the spy came to himself. He was in the poorest of poor shape, after that blow from behind—but he began, swimmingly, to consider ways and means of getting out of there. He was a tough and agile gentleman, this Ali, and he didn't relish being made a fool of, at all.

IN KAPPIE'S office, Sergeant Jan was displaying the swastika button to his pop-eyed superior. Gevaerts was sitting on the edge of the desk, smiling, and Paul Engels was handy, too. He was positively beaming.

"That is it!" he was saying. "In the Tiger's Throat, Mynheers—though we have combed it from the air and from seaward too. And this Mynheer Green—"

Kappie interrupted him. "Mynheer Green is my business, he said tersely. "I have an account to settle with that one."

Gevaerts winked at the Port-captain. "You will be careful, Kappie?" he suggested. "A friend of your wife's—"

Kappie reached for the inkpot, thought better of it, and relaxed. *"Ja,"* he said softly. "A friend of my wife's. That is interesting, Mynheers, is it not? It is going to be very-damned interesting, I promise you that!"

A tap at the door, and Jan put a startled full moon of a face round it. "M-mynheer," he said to Kappie. "It is Ali—"

Ali it was, in a highly frayed condition, but navigating nevertheless. A dozen sentences, and Makassar's service chiefs nodded at one another. Kappie rubbed his chin.

"I am wondering," he said. "I have just remembered, *allejezus,* that we have over us an administrator. He should be informed of this, think you?"

One and all, they did not think so. They said, in so many words, that the minutely-described old crocodile could go jump in the dock or anywhere else that suited him, but that he was not going to be let in on this affair. No, Mynheers, it was altogether too good to be wasted on Mynheer Van Vliet.

MR. GREEN went sulkily about the details of his party—the party that had to be thrown now, despite all his careful arrangements to stop it.

He had to escort a herd of idiotic females into that one region out of all the wide Indies that suited him least. That was the way the thing had panned out, and there was a kind of fatality about it. Mr. Green felt that for once he had got nothing out of philandering with an official's wife, and that was a new and unpleasant experience for him.

Moreover, he hadn't the least notion where it was the red-turbaned man's scheme had gone wrong. Nor did he know if that curious person had succeeded, after all, in the other angle of his undertaking, and got out to the Tiger's Throat with his message of warning.

It was all very trying and hard on the temper. But he had to go through with it, and he had the uneasy sensation that he was being driven—driven by Micaela De Vries. Mr. Green felt, suddenly, a little sick at that idea.

It didn't improve matters, either, to find that Micaela, who should have been dead by this time, was perfectly unruffled, clear-eyed and merry. Certainly not anybody who remembered an attack on her life the night before—

Something had beyond all arguing slipped in the plans. The phone rang again.

"At four o'clock," said Micaela. And Mr. Green, with his stomach curdling, assented.

There were a dozen of them, in two cars—Mr. Green, another playboy by the name of Schultz, and ten women. They left the hotel steps in a great flurry of picnic-baskets, champagne, flowers, and chatter, and Kappie De Vries, behind drawn blinds in the club down the street, saw them go. He was in his fighting kit now, the worn khaki drill with the stains and patches, and there was a taut, expectant look around his mouth, though his blue eyes twinkled.

"Ja!" he said to Gevaerts. "It does not seem to me as if this mynheer is enjoying himself."

"I should doubt if he would," the colonel observed. "Come—it is time we, too, were going. Upon a picnic, ten million devils!"

He broke into a guffaw like a wolf's bark, and went swaggering out into the street. Makassar took no notice of him, or of Kappie either. They had seen the pair of them in this get-up too many times before.

And up in the citadel, Mynheer Administrator Van Vliet, the worthy figurehead, dictated a report to Batavia—a long, wearisome report, explaining just how and why it was there hadn't been any action needed in his district in this matter of the UZ 243.

"We have nothing suspicious hereabouts," said Mynheer Van Vliet. "All is orderly—proceeding according to plan."

VIII

THEY were working like beavers, fifty or sixty men, deep in the mangrove-fringes of the Tiger's Throat.

A sea-creek ran in there, deep, twisting, and almost invisible from the air, with matted lianas dangling over it and muddy, steep banks. On one of such banks, deeper hidden than most, there was a pile of barrels—steel drums, with a derrick and shears, and length upon length of coiled, thick hosepipe. The men, bearded, dirty, and in stained dungarees, were knocking the derrick down, disassembling the shears, and rolling the barrels one by one into the water.

Out in the middle of the creek, not fifty yards away, UZ 243 floated, a long hump of muddy gray.

Her commander, a stocky, fair man, was talking anxiously to the carpet-seller.

"You are sure?" he queried. "It seems foolish to me—fantastic. A woman, you say?"

The red-turbaned man spat. "That Green!" he jerked out. "He is useless, after all—a dumbhead. For what does he want to monkey with women, *himmelsakrament!*"

The captain coughed. "You—took steps, you said?"

"There was nothing else," grunted Abdullah. "We could not have half Makassar prowling here—even if they were women. No, it was perhaps not altogether policy, but it was necessary. Green had become involved, the clumsy fool. There will be no picnic here— But is it as well to pack up, nevertheless. These Dutchmen may smell something now."

He let his eye rove over the busy scene under the mangroves. A guttural hail came from somewhere aloft, in a tall casuarina, and the captain looked round, with a quick *"Was giebt?"* His navigator came running.

"A destroyer, *mein Herr!*" he ejaculated. "One of the Americans—cruising outside—"

The captain swore. "What is he doing there—at this hour? There is something wrong here. I do not like it, I tell you, Hans!"

The red-turbaned man was dragging thoughtfully at his beard. "No, nor I," he confessed. "It seems to me that you had better make ready to leave, *Herr* Captain. While you can—"

"I cannot leave," said the captain. "Not with that ship outside there. Not until dark, and that is three hours yet. We must wait—and I do not like it!"

MICAELA said: "This way, friends!" The two automobiles were pulled up at the blank end of an overgrown trail, among rocks and tree-stumps and tangled undergrowth. It was an excellent place for snakes, sure enough, but neither Mr. Green nor the ladies made any mention of that.

Mr. Green, in fact, was finding it difficult to be even civil. Somewhere, off through the trees there, was the affair he had spent months in engineering—the secret hideout, stocked with gasoline from half-a-dozen stealthy Japanese freighters. Mr. Green had contrived all that, with a combination of cold-steel nerve and patience that was worth every stiver of what he had been paid for it. But this business this afternoon tried him hard. Fretfully he took refuge behind the snakes.

"It is full of them here," he said. "Let us go back a little—"

Micaela's heart gave a jump, and she had to look away to conceal her excitement. It was here, then—the thing Mr. Green had been hiding. She had been sure of it all along—there was something queer about him. Since he had first come edging around, so obviously nosing into Kappie's business, Micaela had known that. And now, by the simple, the very

simple, process of exclusion, she had pinned him down. There was something here.

Micaela hadn't the faintest notion what it might be.

She just wanted to show Kappie De Vries that he wasn't the only competent sleuth in the Indies. That was all.

"Nonsense!" she laughed. "This is an excellent place. Come, ladies!"

They descended on the cars, chattering and fluttering like magpies. Mr. Green looked at them. He was suddenly aware that there was going to be something very unpleasant indeed happen here.

Half-a-mile away, the red-turbaned man was pushed against a tree-trunk, being addressed by a coldly wrathful U-boat commander.

"So? It is thus you manage affairs, Hans! You, and this *kerl* Green. Thunder, we are caught—these damned women will be wandering all around—"

He was set-faced and white to the gills, and Hans shut his eyes. "I—I do not know," he stammered. "The *daku* was a good one."

"Tchah!" The submarine man made a contemptuous noise in his throat. "Wake up and think—what do we do now? With these women, I mean."

He paced up and down for a moment, biting his lips, and cracking his fingers, in an agony of thought. Then he pulled himself up all at once.

"Very good," he said, and his voice was like a sliver of ice. "There is only one way for it, if we are to get out at all. It is—not easy, but it must be done." He paused a moment and then said *"Heil Hitler!"* very softly, as if it were a prayer.

MR. GREEN started. He was making a pretence at eating a sandwich, and no pretence at all at gulping a tall glass of champagne. But now the sandwich dropped from his limp fingers, and the glass went tinkling to bits on a rock. He had heard something.

It had been a whistle, a shrill, softly modulated call. Somewhere in the thickness of the undergrowth, somewhere among the roots and stones and exotic, queer-scented flowers of the Tiger's Throat. He knew what it was, that whistle, and abruptly the strength went out of him altogether.

Micaela had heard it, too, and she was watching him. She sprang to her feet.

"What is it, Mynheer?" she called—and the womens' chatter faded at the urgency of her tone. "What have you here? Speak—quickly!"

But Mr. Green was beyond speech. He could only gibber and point—point at the background that was silent again now, quite silent, with all the birds flown away and the flowers bright in the sunshine.

Micaela stared, blinking. A look of utter incredulity came over her dark face. There were men there among the trees, numbers of men, running and dodging—men that carried weapons. Mr. Green set up a frantic squealing, like a trapped rabbit.

"No—no!" he yelped, as if the runners could hear him. "It wasn't my fault—I couldn't help it, boys! So help me! Hey, don't shoot—*Kamerad, Kamerad—*"

And he began to run, with his hands in the air, towards the Germans. Micaela heard something go *bam-bam-bam-bam*, and saw him crumple. She flung herself on the ground and shrieked at the other women, who were clustered open-mouthed, wide-eyed with terror. Michaela lay with her nose in the dirt, tasting the agonies of humiliation.

She wasn't afraid, much, she discovered; but it hurt worse than any death to remember, all in a flash, the things she

had imagined about Mr. Bertram Green. Micaela lay and welcomed dissolution as an escape from that memory.

The gun was still going *bam-bam-bam,* and there was an incredible lot of noise. Another gun started up, and then another; there were all manner of yells and whistles and raucous, shouted orders. They were making a deal of fuss, Micaela told herself cynically, just to knock off a dozen helpless women. She looked up.

That was when she very nearly did faint, with pure chagrin. Kappie wasn't twenty yards from her; he had a big pistol in each hand, spitting alternately, and his broad red face under the helmet was a sight to see. Beyond him, coming along in a ragged, furious skirmish-line, were Colonel Gevaerts' green-clad native levies. The colonel was out in front of them, roaring like a bull of Basham.

Micaela lay hugging the ground and cried.

TWENTY minutes later, she was facing a grimly sardonic Kappie.

"Well, Madame?" he observed. "You have had a pleasant party, I trust?"

He was tying up a wound in his forearm, where one of the submarine's machine-gun bullets had drilled through the muscle, and he looked formidable, all right. Even Micaela had not seen him thus before, and her knees wabbled at the spectacle.

"I—I—" she said, and stopped. Kappie was wrestling with his bandage. "Let me," she ventured, and fell to making a ship-shape job of it. Kappie continued to regard the world with bright, hard eyes. They were rounding up the U-boat men, or what was left of them after Colonel Gevaerts had quite finished; and somebody was carrying Mr. Green away for the final rites. Kappie snorted.

"Ja!" he said. "You are a little fool, Micaela, do you know that? A total little fool, almighty!"

Micaela was recovering herself a little, now that it was certain Kappie was not fatally hurt. She cast down her eyes and assumed an air of deep humility.

"I know, Kappie," she said. "I am a fool, yes. I—I am sorry—"

With that, she began to cry again. Kappie quit blaring instantly and looked foolish.

"There, there!" he said hastily. "Enough of that—you are not hurt, eh? Nobody will harm you now."

Micaela sagged artistically at the knees, just in time for Kappie to catch her, wounded arm or no. He stood holding her, and yelling for Sergeant Jan, for automobiles, restoratives, nurses, and half a hundred or other immediate necessities, in a voice that might have been heard back in Makassar. She was supported to one of the cars, in company, with a bevy of the other rumpled ladies; and Colonel Gevaerts, standing by, grime and blood to the eyebrows, overheard a peony-faced matron coo over Kappie's drooping better half.

"What did he say to you, little one?" the lady inquired. *"Ach hemel,* these men —they are always the same. Big, ugly tyrants—"

Gevaerts' jaw dropped. He turned, to find Pete Cassidy, disembarked from the destroyer in a hurry, at his elbow. Pete's eyes were also bugging, and he hastily covered his mouth with his hand.

"In God's name!" Gevaerts muttered. "You heard that? You heard what she said—"

Pete Cassidy stole a glance at Kappie. He was standing apart, his wounded arm nursed in the other hand, and looking as if the entire heavens had fallen upon him, all in one piece. Lieutenant-commander Cassidy, U.S.N., heaved a sigh.

"I heard," he said. "Yeah, I heard, Colonel. Wasn't there something somewhere, about a little lesson for somebody?"

Colonel Gevaerts turned away. He was beyond speech—a long, long way beyond it. He merely choked.

Curioddities By Weill

THE PREHISTORIC FLYING LIZARD, **PTERANODON**, *HAD A WING SPREAD OF TWENTY FEET, ALTHOUGH ITS BONES WERE NO THICKER THAN PAPER.* WITH A LARGE TOOTHLESS HEAD AND A BEAK MEASURING OVER THREE FEET LONG, THIS HUGE BAT-LIKE ANIMAL IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE WEIGHED *NOT MORE THAN* ***TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS!***

THE MOST POWERFUL BATTERIES OF STING CELLS KNOWN TO EXIST AMONG SEA CREATURES ARE POSSESSED BY THE **PORTUGUESE MAN-OF-WAR** WHICH *ELECTROCUTES* VICTIMS COMING IN CONTACT WITH IT!

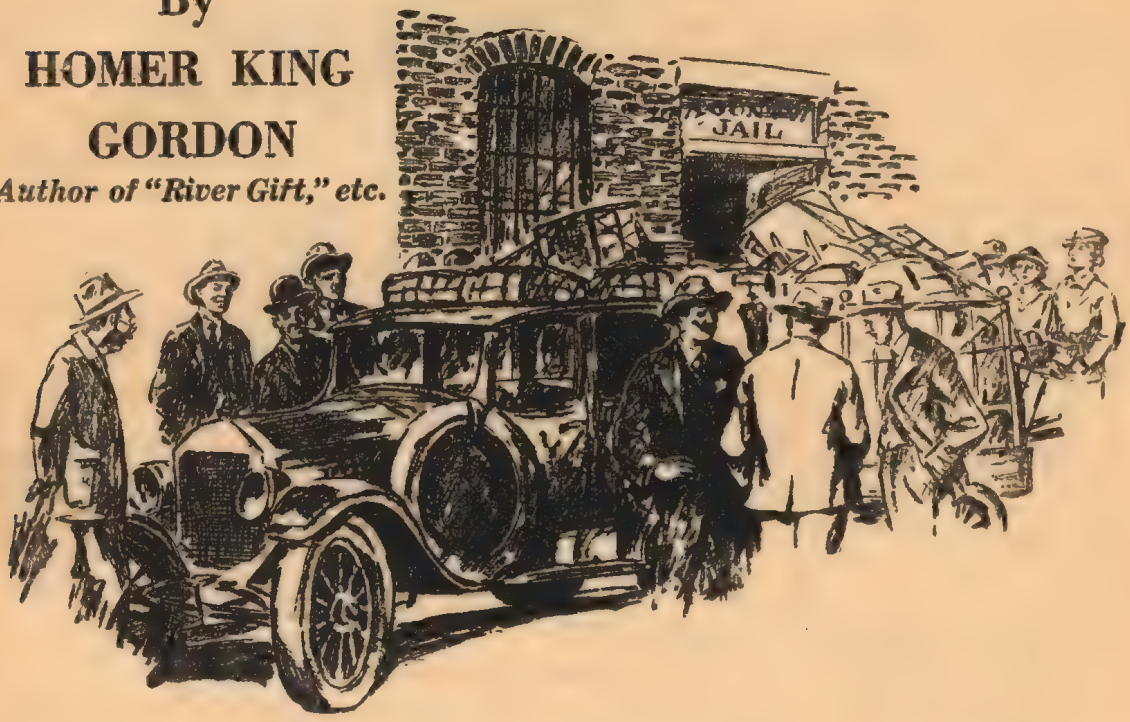
SKUNKS WILL NOT USE THEIR "SPRAY GUNS" ON EACH OTHER — *EVEN IN FIGHTS TO THE DEATH.* OTHER ANIMALS WILL YIELD IT THE RIGHT OF WAY, EXCEPT, PERHAPS, ON THE VERY FIRST OCCASION OF MEETING... THE GREAT HORNED OWL, HOWEVER, POSSESSED OF A POOR SMELLER, IS PROBABLY THE ONLY CREATURE COMPLETELY DEVOID OF RESPECT FOR THE SKUNK'S DEFENSIVE OFFENSE!

WHAT MALE INSECT CAN NEVER EAT ANYTHING? *See Curioddities next time.*

SHOT GUN DECISION

He Always Said Even a Horse Doctor Could Use His Brains

By
HOMER KING GORDON
Author of "River Gift," etc.



DOC PAIN had no one but himself to blame for getting mixed up in the Beecher murder, but it was mighty fortunate for the Lucey family that he got himself involved. He had been out to one of Doc Findaly's farms looking after a sick cow and was on his way back to Farmington when he saw a thin column of smoke coming out of the old Beecher barn.

The barn was on the North eighty and had not been used for anything except storage for years, so Doc naturally thought it was a fire and slammed his old car down the lane that led to the barn hoping he could get there in time to put the fire out.

When he bounced into the weed-grown barnyard and slid his car around to the barn runway, he discovered the smoke was coming out of a stove-pipe that was sticking out of a hole cut in the barn siding. The runway door slid open a few feet and a man and woman appeared in the opening. Back of them Doc could see several small children.

"I saw smoke an' thought the barn was on fire," Doc explained.

"I hope not," the man said, looking up anxiously.

Doc knew it was none of his business, but with winter coming on, an abandoned barn was no place for a family to try and live.

Crawling out of his car he sliced off a piece of plug, crammed it back in his mouth and walked over to the barn entrance, sticking out his hand.

"I'm Doc Pain. Guess you people are strangers around Farmington."

The man shook hands awkwardly.

"Names Lucey," he mumbled. "You the health officer?"

"That's Findaly. I'm just a horse doctor," Doc explained. "How'd you ever get the Beechers to let you move in here?"

Lucey relaxed but looked uneasily at his wife.

"Well," he said, "we didn't have no other place to go. It was rainin' so we just moved in."

"Have any trouble since?"

A man with a little black mustache did order us out, but a fat one come right back an' said it belonged to him an' we could stay 'til we found something else."

"That'd be Willis Beecher with the mustache and his brother Sam," Doc commented. "I guess Sam's all right, but that Willis is pure poison."

He pushed past Lucey and went into the barn.

A ramshackle old two-wheeled trailer was shoved back against the barn stalls and had been converted into a bed, filled with hay and old quilts. There was a chipped iron bedstead, some odds and ends of furniture, a rusty iron stove and a few pots and pans and tin dishes.

A stew of some sort was on the stove. Beside it was a half completed rabbit trap. Doc saw four children, two older boys and two girls. They were all barefooted and in not too clean ragged clothes.

"I'm lookin' for work. Any kind of work," the man said defensively.

Doc saw no food except what was on the stove. He pulled out his pocketbook. Two dollars was all he had in cash. He took this out and gave it to the woman.

"It's only about two miles into town. Send your man in to get some groceries for these kids," Doc ordered. "I'll be back in a day or two."

HE stamped out before they could either protest or thank him, and drove off, leaving the entire family grouped in the barn door, watching him. There was no reason why he could not have taken Lucey into town with him, except back somewhere in his head, Doc was hoping he could limit his efforts toward helping the family to what he had done.

After all it was the business of the county to take care of such families. Doc Findaly was the county health officer. And while he and Findaly had no love for each other, they each conceded the other knew his own business.

Findaly, health officer and coroner as well, was busy when Doc went to his office, but he stuck his head out of the inner room long enough to tell Doc to wait.

"How was the cow?" he asked when the last patient had left and Doc went into his consultation room.

"Colic. I left some medicine and told your tenant to put her on dry feed for a few days. I don't think much of that silage she's been feeding on."

"Spoiled?" Findaly asked anxiously." I knew I ought to fire that tenant."

"Maybe you had him cut it too green," Doc commented.

Findaly sniffed indignantly.

"You'd take his word before you took mine, I suppose. If you'll mail me your bill I'll send you a check."

"Fact is, I stopped in to see you about a family I discovered livin' out in that old abandoned Beecher barn," Doc said.

"I know. I know," Findaly said irritably. "Willis Beecher has been in here two or three times to get me to move them out. I've been too busy but I'll go out there tomorrow and send them packing."

"Where?" Doc demanded.

"What do I care? They came from somewhere. As long as they get out of this county," Findaly snapped.

"A fine friendly attitude," Doc snorted. "Kids barefooted and in rags with no food, and you escort them to the county line. The more I see of some people the more I like dumb animals."

"They're scum," Findaly retorted. "Crime and disease breeders. What right

have they to the taxpayers' money of this county?"

"As much as some of the politicians who drag down good salaries out of money that should go to the poor people who need it," Doc declared. "And whether you like it or the county authorities like it the Lucey family moves into Farmington tomorrow. There's that old empty house of mine that I intended tearing down—it's a damn sight better that that ramshackle abandoned barn. Lucey says he wants work. He and his wife and kids deserve a chance."

"And they'll be on the county inside a week," Findaly predicted.

"Well, they won't be the only ones," Doc said grimly.

Doc had never intended making himself responsible for the comfort and care of the Lucey family, but Findaly had made him fighting mad, and now that he had committed himself, he knew he would have to go through with the plan to provide the Lucey's with a home.

DOC lived in a big house at the south edge of town and was looked after by Sarah Weems who had been his housekeeper for years. There was more funiture in the house than he would ever need, and more stored in the attic.

Sarah was indignant when Doc told her to pick out some of the furniture that was not needed, and explained why.

"It's a wonder you didn't move the whole passel right in here," she sniffed. "As if I didn't have enough to do already!"

"Didn't think of it," Doc grunted. I've got a truck hired for tomorrow. If I can't get 'em moved into the old house tomorrow they might have to spend the night here."

He chuckled when Sarah swished of upstairs. Sarah's heart was as big as a pumpkin, but it was not connected with her tongue. His next job was to waylay the paper boy.

"Look, Bob," he said. "You're a boy scout, aren't you?"

"Sure, Doc. We got a troop meeting tonight."

"Fine. Here's what I want," Doc said.

HE explained the plight of the Lucey family and invited Bob and his scout companions to round up old clothes, shoes, pots and pans and anything else in the way of donations they could get.

"Bring everything you can carry here in the morning, and what you can't handle I'll have the truck pick up," he directed.

Satisfied that he had everything arranged and set, Doc decided to wait and notify the Luceys when the house was ready for them. He figured with a little diplomacy he could even get Sarah and some of her neighbors to arrange the furniture and have a hot meal waiting when the truck made its last trip and picked up the Lucey family. Might as well make it a surprise, he decided.

The surprise, however, turned out to be completely different from anything he had imagined. It came in the form of a telephone call from Findaly, while Doc was having an early breakfast.

"Got some news I thought would interest you," Findaly announced. "That Lucey family you were so interested in. You still want them for tenants?"

"I certainly do," Doc declared.

"Well, you'll find them all at the county jail," Findaly informed him. "Lucey killed Sam Beecher last night. They tried to get away, but they didn't get very far."

He hung up abruptly. Doc could imagine his smirk of satisfaction.

"What's happened?" Sarah asked. "Who got killed?"

"Sam Beecher," Doc growled, picking up his hat. "I'm going up to see the sheriff."

"Who killed him? What'll I tell the truckman if he comes, and them boys?"

"Tell 'em to wait here."

An old delapidated car was standing at the curb in front of the jail, attached to the trailer Doc had seen in the old Beecher

barn the previous afternoon. It was piled with the Lucey's belongings and looked as though it had been hurriedly loaded. A crowd of curious men and women were standing around, staring at the car and trailer, but kept away from it by a deputy sheriff.

Doc pushed through the crowd and into the jail. He and Sheriff Rink had been friends for years and while the sheriff had lived there Doc had always made himself at home in the sheriff's office and living quarters.

As he passed the visitors' waiting-room, Doc saw the Lucey woman and her children huddled together, red-eyed, and terrified. They did not see him. He found the sheriff alone in his office.

"What the hell is this all about?" Doc demanded.

The sheriff shook his head sadly.

"I got a call just after midnight from Willis Beecher. He said Lucey had just shot and killed Sam. Said they discovered Lucey making a raid on their smoke house, and that when he and Sam chased him Lucey turned around and put a load of bird shot through Sam's head."

"What's Lucey got to say?"

"By the time I got out there, the Luceys had packed up and pulled out. I telephoned back and had the roads blocked. One of the state police picked them up about fifteen miles south of here. I've got the two men in jail. The rest of the family are in there in the waiting-room."

"Two men," Doc commented. "I only saw one."

"They're brothers. Course I haven't got much on the older one Jake, except he was helping Ed get away, but I'm holding him anyway."

"Does Lucey admit shooting Sam?"

"Claims he knows nothing whatever about any shooting. His story is that Jake, who owns the car, left them at the barn while he went down to the oil fields to look for work. Jake agrees with that, says he found a job, and that he come back last night to pick up the others. Said he was supposed to work today, and that's why he made the trip at night. They both stick to the same story. I'm checking up and waiting for a call now."

An old single barrel shotgun that was pitted and scarred, but glistening with oil, stood by the sheriff's desk.

"That's the gun I found in Lucey's trailer. It had been freshly cleaned. Lucey admitted it was his, but claimed he hadn't used it for several months," the sheriff explained.

"Bring Lucey in here. I want to talk to him," Doc suggested. "If that man's a killer I don't know anything about human nature."

"Why, sure." The sheriff issued the necessary order to the jailer. "I feel mighty sorry for his family but it looks like he done the shooting. Probably was scared and acted without thinking."

Doc grunted skeptically.

There was not a doubt about Lucey being scared when he was brought down from his cell. His hands were shaking and he could hardly stand.

"Sit down," Doc ordered. "Now I want the truth. What happened last night?"

"I've already told the sheriff all I know," Lucey declared nervously. "I reckon he's told you all I said. It's a plumb mystery to me."

Doc had the impression he was lying.

"What time did you pull away from the barn?" he asked.

"We ain't got a clock. I guess it musta bin about midnight."

"Did you hear a shot?" Doc demanded.

Lucey gulped and shook his head.

Doc asked him about his life, where he had lived and about their trip from the farm they had had to abandon in Kansas, and about his brother and his family, until Lucey was talking freely and had lost some of his caution. The man was caught off his guard by Doc's question, suddenly shot at him.

"How dark was it last night when this happened?" he asked casually.

"Why, there was about a half moon—"

LUCEY stopped, sweat standing out on his white panic-stricken face as he realized he had been trapped.

"Might as well tell us the truth now," Doc urged.

Lucey wiped his sleeve across his face.

"I didn't do it," he whimpered. "I did hear the shot. I thought he was shooting at me."

"Who?"

"Willis Beecher. He had a shotgun when he ran out of the house. The one that was killed come runnin' out right behind him. I turned and run as fast as I could."

"So you were trying to rob the smoke house?" the sheriff accused him.

"Honest to God, Sheriff, I wasn't near the house at all. Jake got a job, but he wouldn't be paid 'til next week. He didn't have any money and I know'd we had to eat, so while they packed up the trailer I took a gunny sack and went down to the Beecher's turnip patch. If it'd been daylight I'd a gone right to the house an' asked for some turnips, but everything was dark so I jist started pulling up a few. Then a dog ran out an' started barking, and the house lit up an' they ran out. That's the honest to God truth."

"Right sure you didn't have this gun with you?" the sheriff demanded.

"Sheriff, I ain't had enough money to buy a shell for that gun for months," Lucey said earnestly. "The boys kept it oiled up, hopin' we'd get some shells some day. This Doc here saw me helpin' them build a rabbit trap yesterday."

The telephone rang and the sheriff talked briefly.

"Jake's story about his job checks," the sheriff told Doc.

Lucey looked hopeful.

"It's the truth, everything I've said."

"You got caught in one lie," the sheriff said grimly. "Maybe you'll get caught in another. You finished, Doc?"

Doc nodded and Lucey was led back to his cell.

"I think he's innocent," Doc declared when he and the sheriff were alone again. "What's that about catching him in another lie?"

"Sam was shot in the turnip patch, not around the smoke house," the sheriff informed him. "It'll take some proving if Lucey can prove he didn't have his gun or a shotgun shell. He admits being there. If he didn't kill Sam, who did?"

"I wouldn't put it past Willis. He's a maniac when he's mad. I heard he and Sam never did get along too well together. What's their property set-up anyway?"

"I guess it was divided when their mother died. They lived there together. I heard Sam was considering selling his share and moving into town."

"And now Willis gets it all," Doc commented.

"I suppose so," the sheriff admitted. "But, Doc, what you're hinting at is pretty far-fetched. I wouldn't want to accuse a man of killing his own brother unless I had a lot more proof than you've offered."

"Anyway, you don't want to hold Lucey's wife and kids here, do you?" Doc demanded.

"I haven't had time to figure what else I can do with them."

"Have that deputy drive them and that heap of junk out to my house. I've made arrangements to take care of them," Doc said.

He called Sarah and gave orders to have the truck loaded, some food prepared, and everything moved into the old house. Then he went into the waiting-room and told Mrs. Lucey what arrangements he had made.

She simply stared in silent bewilderment, but the kids were excited and jubilant. Hating any parade of charity, Doc made his instructions brief. There would be time to talk later. When the family

left the jail, Doc went back to the sheriff.

"Let's go out to the Beecher place," he suggested. "I suppose Willis is out there."

"He may be. I left a deputy out there to see that nothing was disturbed. Thought there might be tracks or something. I ain't had time to look for anything yet."

"In the meantime, I believe if I was you I wouldn't let Willis know too much about what Lucey admitted or didn't admit," Doc suggested.

"He was in here when they brought Lucey in. I already told him what Lucey said then. I wasn't intending to say anything else just yet, but, Doc, I think you're on the wrong track."

"Maybe," Doc grunted. "I'll admit I don't know how in hell I'll prove I'm right."

WILLIS BEECHER, thin-lipped, sullen, a scowl between his close-set black eyes, stood in the doorway and watched them come up the kitchen walk.

"Has he confessed yet?" His voice was harsh and clipped.

"Not yet," the sheriff admitted. "I figured I'd better come out and take a look around."

"There's nothing to see," Willis exclaimed. "Here's the smoke house. The dog got us up. I was about half asleep when I run out and got a glimpse of him running across the barn lot. I started after him. Sam was right behind me."

"Wonder you didn't have your gun," Doc remarked.

"I wish to hell I had had," Willis declared. "Trouble was, I didn't know what we were getting into."

"Wonder he didn't shoot you instead of Sam, since you were ahead of Sam," Doc commented. "Couldn't you see he had a gun?"

"There wasn't much light," Willis said uneasily. "I was about to cut him off when he turned toward the other fence. Don't think he saw Sam when he made that move until Sam began yelling for him to stop."

"Sam wasn't carrying a gun either, was he?" Doc asked.

"No, but I guess he picked up a club as we ran past the wood pile. He had one in his hand when he was shot," Willis said.

"How far away from Sam was Lucey when he fired?" Doc asked.

"About twenty or thirty feet, I guess," Willis answered.

They walked out to the turnip patch and looked at the spot where Sam had died. The heavy turnip tops were mashed down and stained with blood. The deputy assured the sheriff that no one had been allowed in the patch after the body was removed.

"I reckon we'd better take a look around the barn," the sheriff remarked.

"Nothing likely to be found up there," Doc protested. "Besides I've got to get back to town."

The sheriff looked at him a moment and nodded slowly.

"I guess you're right. Looks cut and dried. Think I'd better keep the deputy here?"

"Coroner might want to bring the jury out here. I expect you'd better," Doc advised.

Willis looked sullenly resentful, but said nothing except that he had to go into town and see the undertaker. He was getting his car out of the garage when the sheriff and Doc drove away.

"Now what's on your mind?" the sheriff demanded.

"I'm thinking maybe having that deputy there was one of the smartest tricks you ever pulled," Doc grunted. "I've got a hunch. Maybe it won't amount to anything, but it may save an innocent man from being hanged. I want two things."

"Probably get me laughed out of office," the sheriff observed. "But you've been right once or twice in your life. What d'you want?"

"First I want you to keep Willis in town all day or until I tell you to let him leave. Make some excuse. That's up to you."

"I guess I can manage," the sheriff agreed. "What else?"

"Write a note to your deputy out there telling him to let me do exactly what I want to do, and then to keep his mouth shut," Doc explained.

"Just remember searching a house without a search warrant is strictly against the law," the sheriff reminded him.

"Might be for you. For me, it would just be illegal entry," Doc grunted.

"And would Willis enjoy putting you in jail!"

"About as much as I'll enjoy putting him there," Doc said grimly.

WHEN they got back to town and the sheriff had written the note to the deputy and given it to him, Doc went home. He found Sarah grim and indignant.

"Well, they're over there and I never saw such trash in my life, an' I'm not talking about their furniture either."

"Where's Bob and the other scouts?"

"Over there helping them straighten up, I guess."

Doc went over to his office in the old barn he had converted into an animal hospital, and getting out his old double barreled shotgun searched through his desk until he had found a shell.

Loading the gun, he walked out in the barnyard and fired into the air.

Sarah came screeching out of the house.

"Doc Pain, have you gone crazy! I declare you scared me to death."

"Took a shot at a hawk," Doc lied calmly. "Missed him though."

Back in his office he extracted the empty shell. Taking down a bottle of acid and a glass dropper, he carefully made some crosses on the inside of the shell and then put it in his pocket.

The scouts came running up to the barn, attracted by the shot. There were five of them.

"Got a job for you, boys," Doc told them. "I know you've already worked hard today, but maybe there's still a good deed left in you."

"Sure, Doc," Bob promised. "What's the job and when do we start?"

"Right away. In my car, but this is a mighty serious job. I want each one of you to promise you'll not say a word about this job to anyone until I give permission."

"You can trust a scout," Bob declared. "I give my promise."

The other boys added theirs.

"Let's start then," Doc proposed.

Taking along his shotgun and the bottle of acid, he drove out to the Beecher farm, using back roads where he would not be so apt to be seen with his carload of boys.

The deputy read the sheriff's note and grinned.

"You're the boss," he offered. "What's the program?"

Doc led the deputy and the boys out to the spot where Sam had died after instructing them to be careful and not disturb the turnip tops any more than necessary.

"Here's what I want," he explained. "Somewhere within a radius of thirty or forty feet from this spot, I hope you'll find a shotgun shell. Try and find it without mashing these tops down any more than

you can help. If you find the shell, don't touch it. Call me."

The house was locked, but Doc found the key and got into the back door. He had been in the building before and he thought he remembered what kind of a gun Willis owned. He was right. It was a twelve gauge automatic, that had been recently cleaned. He also found a half empty box of shells, and by coincidence, the shells were the same make and color as the one he had fired into the air in his own barnyard.

That meant he would not have to use his gun and acid again.

Fitting one of the shells into the gun, he went outside and fired it into the air, after calling the deputy over, showing him the gun, the box of shells he had taken from inside the house.

"Mark it," he told the deputy giving him the shell when he took it from the gun.

The deputy took his penknife and scratched his initials on the shell. Doc took it then, and going back to the house, he cleaned the gun and put it back where he had found it, relocked the house and was on his way back to the turnip patch when one of the scouts found what Doc had only dared hope would be found.

It was a freshly exploded shotgun shell, matching in color and make those inside the house.

Doc picked it up, handed it to the deputy, and then replaced it with the acid treated shell he had prepared before leaving town. Then taking the shell they had found, he marked it with his initials, and the sheriff marked it with his. The boys watched in silent bewilderment.

"I think we can prove now who killed Sam Beecher," Doc said quietly. "But it all depends on keeping our mouths shut."

"You needn't worry about me," the deputy assured him. "Just the same, I'm damned curious."

"You won't have to be long," Doc promised.

Back in town he went directly to the sheriff's office.

"Willis is over at the district attorney's office. Then he's coming back here, but I don't know how much longer I can keep him in town. He found out what Lucey claims and is as mad as a wet hen. You through out there and ready to do some talking?"

"I want to talk to him," Doc said.

He gave the sheriff the two shells from his pocket. The one he had fired from Willis' gun and the one the scouts had found.

"I can find out if they were fired from the same gun all right. Looks like they were, but, Doc, that's not proof. I'll admit I'm beginning to think you're right, but what's to keep Willis from saying he went out there and shot at a hawk, or rabbit or something?"

"I intend to," Doc promised soberly.

"How?"

"I'm going to set a trap for him with your help. All you've got to do is keep that deputy of yours out there until dark, and agree to what I say when Willis gets here, except when I suggest searching the barn for a shell—protest you can't do that today, but will the first thing tomorrow morning."

"Sure. But I don't see how that will trap him," the sheriff remarked.

"Well, I think I do," Doc said. "Maybe I'm wrong. But he knows that shell is out there somewhere in the turnip patch. I happened to remember this morning he had an automatic and an automatic kicks a shell out when it's fired. He didn't have time or didn't think about the shell last night and since then your deputy would have spotted him if he tried to look for it."

"What if he does?"

"Just wait and see."

THEY did not have long to wait for Willis. He glared at Doc when he came in the office.

"I've got things to do," he growled. "What was it you wanted?"

The sheriff has told me about what Lucey claims," Doc said blandly. "I'm inclined to agree with the sheriff that he's full of lies. Here's his gun. The only thing the sheriff needs to clinch this case is the shell that was fired out of it last night. They've got ways to tell absolutely if a shell was fired from a certain gun."

Willis moved uneasily.

"He could have kicked the shell out anywhere," he commented.

"True enough," Doc agreed, "but by a lucky chance for the sheriff, he might have been so excited he didn't extract the empty shell until he got back to the old barn. I think that ought to be searched thoroughly, Sheriff."

"I'm too busy for that today, but I'll do it the first thing tomorrow morning," the sheriff said impatiently.

"Of course," Doc rambled on. "If he was smart, he might have defaced the shell so it couldn't be proved it was shot from his gun here, but even finding a shell would prove he lied when he claimed he didn't have any."

"I can't stay here all day," Willis broke in at this point.

Doc nodded slightly to the sheriff.

"Might as well go on back home then," the sheriff said. "It's about the coroner's inquest, but we can talk that over tomorrow when I come out."

Willis stamped out and got into his car. They watched him drive away.

"I see what you mean," the sheriff said. "But I think he's too smart to fall into it."

"He's scared and he's worried," Doc predicted. "A guilty man scared and worried hasn't enough will power to just sit tight. It's human nature that makes them keep on trying to be smart and outfox the men they're afraid of. They make their own rope halters."

"We'll see," the sheriff declared.

Just after dark that night Doc and the sheriff slipped into the abandoned barn and settled down to wait. They had been there about an hour when someone outside whistled softly. The sheriff answered and the deputy who had been watching the turnip patch came into the barn.

"Right after dark he went out there with a lantern and commenced hunting for the shell," he said softly. "I think he found it for he went back in the house. Thought I'd better hurry over here."

"Probably gone to bed. I sure wish I was in mine. I was up half of last night or more," the sheriff exclaimed.

"So was he," Doc observed.

The deputy went outside to warn them if anyone approached, and he had not been there long when he ducked back inside.

"Someone coming across the meadow with a lantern," he warned.

"Get back in the stall and keep him covered," the sheriff directed. "You keep out of this from now on, Doc. I've been coached enough to know what to do."

WILLIS walked openly into the barn. By the lantern he carried they could see his shotgun under his arm.

"You're covered Willis. Don't raise your gun. This is the sheriff."

Willis blinked at the sheriff's flashlight beam. But he had control of himself.

"Guess we're here for the same reason," he remarked. "I got to thinking about that shell and decided I'd come over here and have a look around."

"Take his gun, Jim," the sheriff instructed his deputy.

Willis handed over his gun and attempted to assume hurt indignation.

"I don't understand why you treat me this way," he protested.

"We think you might have an empty shell in your pocket, Willis," the sheriff explained. "Just raise your hands up while I take a look."

He found an empty shell in Willis' overall pocket. The brass end had been battered.

"Ever see this before, Doc?" the sheriff asked.

Doc looked at the inside of the shell and showed the acid marks to the sheriff.

"That's the shell I planted in the exact spot where the shell that killed Sam hit the ground where we found it. I guess we won't have much trouble proving it came from Willis' gun."

"None," the sheriff stated. "You're under arrest for the murder of your brother Willis Beecher. Got anything to say?"

"It wasn't murder. It was self-defense," Willis said sullenly. "I went out to take a shot at that thievin' scum in my turnip patch an' Sam came after me with a club. Try and prove that ain't true, you and your mangy horse doctor friend."

"From now on, Willis, it looks to me like the burden of proof is going to be strictly up to you," the sheriff retorted. "We might as well get back to town and let an innocent man go home to supper with his family."

"And not to turnips either," Doc said grimly. "You tell Findaly that when you see him, Sheriff. I think he'll be dodging me, keeping out of my way for awhile."

Blue Peter

By William De Lisle

THE brown and clumsy ferry boats
Come creaming down the bay,
And rub their painted shoulders
With the tramp from Mandalay,
And the liner bound for Frisco,
And the gay-flagged "Betsy B.,"
And the tub from Puerto Rico,
And the barque from Barbary.
In a glamor
With their clamor
My heart puts out to sea.

I am fumbling with the moorings,
I am swinging with the tide,
I am swishing up to China,
I am tracking down the Clyde,
I am bringing it to Belfast,
I am rounding Java Head,
The sea is blue and very blue,
The sails are white and spread.
By early morn,
We'll round the Horn
Through seas of gold and red.

There are apples in my cargo,
And the holds are flowing full
Of frozen meat, and yellow wheat
And piling bales of wool.
I'll bring back fretted ivory,
And laces, sheer and fine,
And figs and dates and muscatels
From teeming Palestine,
And pearly rice,
And fragrant spice,
And casks of mellow wine.

Sometimes the seas are high and fierce,
Sometimes the seas are still,
The westering is scarlet,
But the east's a daffodil.
The breeze is cool and salty,
The waves are running free,
And even now the ferry boat
Is slackening to the pier.
With throbbing start,
My dreaming heart
Comes homing from the sea.

THE SHOOTER'S CORNER

Conducted by

PETE KUHLHOFF

Cartridge Nomenclature

THIS little "Billie dew" is going to seem a little silly, or maybe go all the way and be a big pain in the neck to the old-timer. But, according to my mail, there are a lot of younger shooters coming along who are a little confused by the various numbers such as .45-70-500, .250-3000 etc. that indicate the calibre of various cartridges.

The first number practically always indicates the bore diameter of the rifle before the grooves are scraped in. Take the old standby "thuty-thuty" for example. The first .30 means that the bore is thirty one-hundredths of an inch in diameter. The grooves are cut about .004 inch deep, so the groove diameter would be .308 inch. The original .30-30 was loaded with 30 grains of smokeless powder—thus we get the second 30.

Nowadays ammunition is loaded to velocity and breech pressure standards. So if you take a modern .30-30 cartridge apart and discover 28 or maybe 33 grains of powder, don't be alarmed and think that you have some carelessly manufactured ammunition.

There are a lot of lugs around the country who think the bolt action Springfield army rifle is a .30-30. 'Tain't so! She was an original smokeless powder job, but would have been about a .30-50 if the powder charge had been used for the second figure—but it wasn't! The Springfield is the .30 calibre model of 1903 rifle, chambered for the model of 1906 cartridge. Shortened, it is the .30-06 cartridge.

On the other hand, we have the old black powder cartridges, such as .38-55, .32-40, .38-40, .45-70-500, etc., the second number indicating the amount of black powder in grains, but which have now in almost all cases been brought up to date with modern smokeless powder.

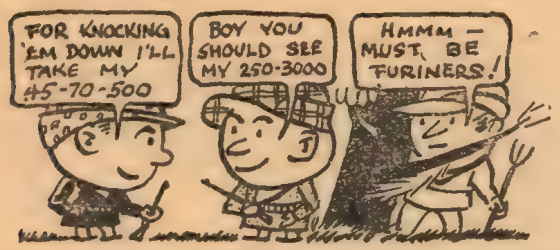
The .250-3000 is a .25 calibre cartridge which was originally loaded to travel 3000 feet a second at the muzzle of the rifle.

The late Captain E. C. Crossman suggested to Remington that the then new .25 Roberts cartridge be named the .257 as a means of avoiding difficulty in separating it from the other .25 calibre guns.

When the cartridge is designated with three numbers, such as the .45-70-500, the .45 represents the bore diameter. 70 is the number of grains of black powder, and the 500 is the weight of the bullet in grains.

In the .45-70 Springfield single shot rifle, used by the U. S. Army 'til the Krag .30-40 was adopted, the cartridge was loaded, using the 500 grain bullet for the infantry whose rifles had 32 inch barrels. And the 405 grain bullet for the cavalry

who used the carbine. The idea being to reduce recoil.



To confuse things even more the Germans added a wrinkle with another figure indicating in millimeters the length of the case, added to the calibre figure. Such as the 6.5 x 57; being a .25 calibre cartridge with a case 57 millimeters long, which is about 2¼ inches; the 6.5 x 54, 9.3 x 62 Magnum, etc.

The Magnum business brings on an item for a little more confusion. The English first used the term to mean a cartridge of more power than usual for that particular calibre or gauge. For example, the .220 Swift would be considered a Magnum in England.

Are there any questions? Shoot them along and I'll try to answer them. Address me care of SHORT STORIES.

This and That

Here's part of a letter from Harold Bryant, a good scout, who is a rancher out in Colorado and has hunted most of his life:

"Dear Pete: Congratulations and best wishes for the success of your col-yum! I'll follow SHORT STORIES and your Corner with great gusto.

"I'm the Executive Officer of our N. R. A. Club here, and, since you're interested in such things, I use a Winchester .22 single shot falling block action (high wall) with relined No. 3 barrel. Like it fine. Especially good for offhand work.

"Got a nice 4-point buck (10 points in East) this season. My favorite deer gun is a Winchester '95, .30-40 calibre, in N. R. A. model. I took off a lot of the wood, etc., so that it now looks like a long barreled (28") '95 carbine. For short range snap-shooting in the cedars, though, I prefer my .30-30 carbine. In spite of all the 'big shots' I prefer the .30-40 to the .30.06, 270, etc. . . . especially with the 180 grain soft nose bullet. I like to bring some meat home—and I don't want it to be sausage either. So much for that. Just thought you might be interested in gun gossip."

The Boys of High Standard automatic pistol fame up in New Haven, Conn., are busy building a new factory and by the time this reaches the reader will no doubt be running full capacity, producing .50 calibre machine guns for the British government.

We hear that Uncle Sam has been toying with the idea of arming the infantrymen with the .45 calibre service pistol in place of the bayonet.

The army is also reported to be on the lookout for a five pound automatic rifle, chambered for a light cartridge of .30 or .32 calibre.

Complete instructions in the principles on which good marksmanship is based is contained in the "Handbook on Small Bore Rifle Shooting," by Colonel Townsend Whelen, published by the Sporting Arms & Ammunition Manufacturers, Inst. We have made arrangements to send this handbook to all SHORT STORIES readers interested in shooting. Just enclose ten cents, in coin or stamps, to cover cost of handling and postage, and send to The Shooter's Corner, SHORT STORIES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City, New York.

Everyone interested in shooting should join the National Rifle Association of America. I will be glad to furnish particulars.

The Story Tellers' Circle

With the R. A. F.

"WHY don't you have another Major story?" "What has happened to Pat Greene?" These are questions which come our way fairly often, and the other day a newspaper clipping was sent us which gives the answer. It is from the Bedford (England) *Times* and *Standard* for November 14th and says:

Mr. L. Patrick Greene, the well-known author and novelist, who is the Head Warden of "B" Group, is leaving the town today to take up duties with the Royal Air

In the next issue

Short Stories for February 10th

"We'll take a million out of that claim! Half a million anyways! It couldn't be less'n a quarter-million, noways you look at it."

And that's the way the gold legend spread — even on Halfaday where they regard such matters more or less as routine. Then Black John got onto the sourdoughs' game.

BLACK SAND

A novelette in our next issue by

JAMES B. HENDRYX

The congressman felt he should learn to fly; Federal Proving Ground thought so too, just so long as he flew away from there——

"WINGS FOR THE CONGRESSMAN"

a novelette by

A. A. CAFFREY

Also in the next issue——

ARTHUR O. FRIEL . . . . . "Man Eater"

GEORGE ARMIN SHAFTEL . . "Squatter's Court"

WALTER C. BROWN . . . . . "The Black Parrot"

GENE VAN . . . . . "Hatful of Trouble"

CLAY PERRY . . . . . "Talking Rivers"

Force. He has been residing in Bedford for some eight or nine years. His wife is the Borough Deputy W. V. S. Organizer. An informal farewell party was given to him by the members of "B" Group in the St. Andrew's School yesterday (Thursday) evening.

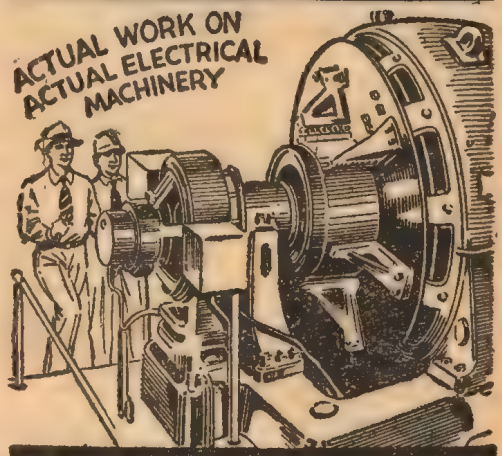
Well, perhaps when the war is over the Major will have taken to the airways; we cannot exactly visualize Jim, the Hottentot, as an aircraftsman servicing the Major's plane, but you never know—the war is full of miracles. Anyway, Pat Greene's friends in America wish him well, as well as his fellow citizens of Bedford.

Another interesting speculation is as to what is happening in the Major's Africa these days while war flows and ebbs over Europe. He used to rove Rhodesia, meeting up with the Rhodesian Police—news dispatches tell of their service with British forces in Egypt and operating in Tanganika. He occasionally used to fall foul of the Portuguese police forces; could they be the men cut off from supplies by the blockade? Are any IDB's operating in Africa today? Or are they all in the Secret Service out after Fifth Columnists? We wonder.

Fathers and Sons

WE FEEL very proud that second generations of SHORT STORIES authors are appearing in our pages, and there is an interesting line-up in this number and next one—February 10th. This time we print a long Hashknife's story by W. C. Tuttle, and also a short Western by Harrison Hendryx—who is a son of James B. Hendryx, author of the Halfaday Creek stories, always so popular with our readers. In our next issue the situation is reversed; there will be a Black John novelette by James B. Hendryx—prospecting as done on Halfaday—and a Red Harris story by Gene Van, who otherwise is young Bud Tuttle, son of Hashknife's creator. And they are all good stories.

Will you be ready to fill one of the jobs calling for skilled men?



TRAIN FOR A BETTER JOB IN
ELECTRICITY
12 WEEKS SHOP TRAINING

AMERICA NEEDS TRAINED MEN

Our big defense program and industrial expansion is creating thousands of NEW jobs. Are YOU prepared? Now is the time to get YOUR training in **Electricity**—the power that makes the whole program possible. **Electricity is the power behind the program.**

"LEARN BY DOING"

Here at Coyne you can get 12 weeks' practical shop training on real electrical machinery. You learn airplane ignition, do house-wiring, learn power plant operation, etc. You "Learn By Doing", not by books. You don't need previous experience or advanced education, and **you don't need much money for —**

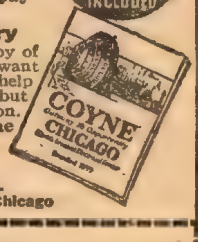
I'll Finance Your Training

I not only give you the RIGHT KIND OF TRAINING, but make it easy to get that training NOW. If you do not have a lot of money, you can get my training first and pay for it in easy monthly payments after you graduate.

AN EXTRA 4 WEEKS COURSE IN RADIO INCLUDED

Get My Complete Story

I want to send you YOUR copy of my big FREE picture book. I want to tell you about my plans to help you, even though you have but very little money. No obligation. No salesmen will call. Mail the coupon today.



H. C. LEWIS, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 11-66, Chicago

H. C. LEWIS, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 11-66, Chicago, Ill.

Please send your Big FREE Book, all the facts about Coyne, and your Plans to help fellows like me to get ahead.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

Old Age Insurance
Men & Women Ages 70 to 90

Costs Only One-Cent-a-Day

The National Protective Insurance Co., 418 Pickwick Bldg., Kansas City, Mo., has especially prepared a new Old Age accident policy with Hospital and General Coverage benefits to be issued exclusively to men and women — ages 70 to 90, who are prevented on account of their advanced age from getting insurance from other companies.

This new policy pays maximum benefits of $2,000, increasing to $3,000. Maximum monthly benefits of $150, including Hospital care. Large cash sums for fractures, dislocations, etc. Doctor bills. Liberal benefits paid for any and every accident.

The Company is the oldest and largest of its kind and has promptly paid Over One and Three-Quarter Million Dollars in cash benefits to its policyholders.

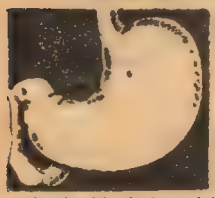
The entire cost is $3.65 for a whole year — 365 days — Only One-Cent-a-Day.

Simply send name, age and address of person to be insured, and the name and relationship of the beneficiary — that is all you do — then the Company will send a policy for 10 days' FREE INSPECTION, without obligation. 30 days' insurance will be added free when $3.65 is sent with request for policy. Offer is limited, so write today.

FREE SAMPLES OF REMARKABLE TREATMENT FOR

Stomach Ulcers

Due to Gastric Hyperacidity



H. H. Bromley, of Shelburne, Vt., writes: "I suffered for years with acid-stomach trouble. My doctors told me I had acid stomach ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I had lost a lot of weight and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. After taking Von's Tablets, I felt perfectly well, ate almost anything and gained back the weight I had lost." If you suffer from indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, bloating or any other stomach trouble due to gastric hyperacidity, you, too, should try Von's for prompt relief. Send for FREE Samples of this remarkable treatment and details of trial offer with money back guarantee. Instructive Booklet is included. Write:

PHILADELPHIA VON CO. Dept. 440-H
Fox Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

Professional Model

SEND NO MONEY! — Save Money!

TRANSPARENT ROOFLESS PARTIAL

60 Days' Trial! We make **FALSE TEETH** for *you* by MAIL from *your own* mouth-impression. **Money-Back Guarantee of Satisfaction.** **FREE** Impression material, directions, catalog. **U. S. Dental Co., Dept. 1-13, Chicago, Ill.**

$6.85 to $35

DO YOU WANT TO STOP TOBACCO?

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Redeemer. Not a substitute, not habit forming. Write for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and dependable, easy way to relieve the craving many men have.

Newell Pharmacal Co.
Dept. 600, St. Louis, Mo.

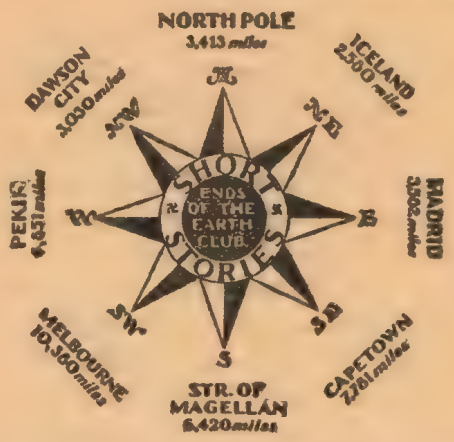
FREE BOOK

INVENTORS

Take first step to protect your Invention—without obligation. Get free "Record of Invention" form and 48-page Book, "Patent Guide for the Inventor." Time counts! Write today.

CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN
Registered Patent Attorney
145 Adams Building, Washington, D. C.

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH CLUB



HERE is a free and easy meeting place for the brotherhood of adventurers. To be one of us, all you have to do is register your name and address with the Secretary, Ends-of-the-Earth Club, c/o Short Stories, Inc., 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. Your handsome membership - identification card will be sent you at once. There are no dues—no obligations.

Won't some of you members fill up this mail box?

Dear Secretary:

Since I joined the Ends of the Earth Club last Spring, I have moved. My new address is 3223 West 92nd St., Cleveland, Ohio.

I have written to so many members, but have received no answers. Won't someone *please* write? I will answer any letter I receive.

I have a large range of hobbies. My favorites are stamps and post card collecting and correspondence.

Hoping to hear from someone soon, I remain,

E. Post.

3223 West 92nd St.,
Cleveland, Ohio.

We welcome a member from far off India

Dear Secretary:

Please enroll me as a member of your club. I enjoy reading every story in SHORT STORIES, and can honestly say I have not found any other magazine more interesting.

I shall be very pleased to hear from any pen-pal, especially those interested in stamp collecting. Any stamps sent on approval or exchange will receive my best attention.

Thanking you, and wishing the club every success, I am

Cordially yours,
W. R. Wigmore.

Johnson Lodge,
Podanur—S. I. Ry.,
South India.

Have we some Portuguese or Spanish members

Dear Secretary:

I have read in the SHORT STORIES magazine your invitation to the Ends of the Earth Club. Having much time to write I would be very glad to correspond with other club members from Central and South America, Spain, Portugal or someone of United States of America who descends from Portuguese and Spaniards.

Awaiting your reply,
I remain,
Yours faithfully,
Celso Vasconcelos

Rua Santa Luiza, 98
Rio de Janeiro,
Brasil—S. A.

A Canadian stamp collector

Dear Secretary:

I hail from Canada and am a keen stamp collector. Have lived in six of the provinces and have traveled in all out of the way places in Canada, prospecting for gold, lode and placer. Spent one summer

Think of It!

Our Graduates Run 47% of ALL the Identification Bureaus of America!

Send for complete list of our 600 Bureaus where our graduates have been placed in good positions as

FINGERPRINT EXPERTS

Then write the nearest Bureau and learn what our graduates think of us!

We have space here to list only a FEW of these more than 600 institutions, so be sure to send for the *complete* list!

State of Michigan
State of Washington
State of Massachusetts
State of Illinois

State of Idaho
State of Colorado
State of Iowa
State of Utah
State of Ohio
Boston, Mass.
New York, N. Y.
Pittsburgh, Pa.
St. Paul, Minn.
Mexico City, Mex.
Augusta, Ga.
Seattle, Wash.
Omaha, Neb.
Des Moines, Ia.
Montreal, Can.
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Elgin, Ill.
Syracuse, N. Y.
Tampa, Fla.
Long Beach, Cal.
St. Louis, Mo.
Lansing, Mich.
Burlington, Ia.
Erie, Pa.
Oklahoma City, Okla.
Trenton, N. J.
Detroit, Mich.
El Paso, Tex.
Schenectady, N. Y.
Scranton, Pa.
Lincoln, Neb.
Mobile, Ala.
Little Rock, Ark.
Pontiac, Mich.
Havana, Cuba
Miami, Fla.
Birmingham, Ala.
Columbus, Ohio
Galveston, Tex.
Houston, Tex.
Windsor, Ont.
Pueblo, Colo.
Salt Lake City, Utah
Atlantic City, N. J.
Sioux City, Iowa
Rochester, N. Y.
Cleveland, Ohio
Spokane, Wash.
Fort Worth, Tex.
Shreveport, La.

Want a Regular Monthly Salary?

Be a Secret Service and Identification Expert!

Enjoy the thrill of getting your man—with no personal danger—PLUS a regular monthly paid salary and the opportunity to share in Rewards. Learn at home, in spare time, and at low cost, the unique secrets of this young, fascinating and fast growing profession. You have exactly the same opportunity that was offered the hundreds of our graduates who now hold splendid positions in more than 600 institutions. Each of these bureaus has anywhere from ONE to FIFTEEN of our graduates on regular salaries—and new openings develop from time to time.

Wonderful Opportunity for TRAINED MEN in This Young, Fast Growing Profession

Of the thousands of towns in America, three-fourths are still without identification bureaus. Many more are bound to come! That spells OPPORTUNITY. But you must be READY! It's easy to master this profession that combines thrills with personal safety, AND the security of a steady income. We show you HOW—just as we have already shown the hundreds who now hold good pay positions.

FREE! The Confidential Reports Operator No. 38 Made to His Chief

Just rush coupon! Follow this Operator's exciting hunt for a murderous gang. Also, get free, "The Blue Book of Crime," showing the wonderful opportunities in the field of Finger Prints and Crime Detection. Take your first step TODAY toward a steady income and success. Mail coupon NOW!

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Avenue Dept. 1561 Chicago

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 1561, Chicago.
Gentlemen: With no obligation on my part, send me Confidential Reports of Operator No. 38, also illustrated "Blue Book of Crime," complete list of bureaus employing your graduates, together with your low prices and Easy Terms offer. (Literature will be sent ONLY to persons stating their age.)

Name .....

Address..... Age.....

SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

Every hour, day and night, 4,080 people are disabled through sickness and accident. You never know when tragedy strikes. The Policy of the Century comes to your aid at the time of your most dire need—when you are down, financially handicapped, unable to care for loved ones.

THE POLICY OF THE CENTURY

WILL HELP PAY YOUR BILLS

YOU RECEIVE $5,000.00 Accidental Death $7,500.00 Benefits for stated Accidental Death, Loss of Hands, Feet, or Eyes $25 PER WEEK FOR SICKNESS $25 PER WEEK FOR ACCIDENT $100 EMERGENCY ALLOWANCE COST TO YOU ONLY $1 PER MONTH

The United Insurance Company of Chicago, a legal reserve insurance company which has paid millions of dollars to policyholders, offers you the new "CENTURY" Policy. This company is not an association or assessment company. Old, reliable. It is approved by state insurance departments. Be safe! Costs only $1 per month. Just mail coupon.

INSURES MEN AND WOMEN

The new "Century" Sickness and Accident Policy insures both men and women with the benefits shown here, plus many other liberal features outlined in the policy.

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION

Anyone between 16 and 75 can apply, half benefits after age 60. No agent will call.

SEND NO MONEY Remember you do not send one cent—just mail the coupon below. Don't delay—do this today!

MAIL COUPON NOW FOR DETAILS

UNITED INSURANCE COMPANY
ELGIN TOWER, Suite U-83-B
ELGIN, ILLINOIS

NO AGENT WILL CALL

Please mail me at once complete information and how to get the "Century" Policy for my Free Inspection without obligation.

Name.....

Address.....

SAVE UP TO 50%

30 DAYS TRIAL

15-TUBE MIDWEST RADIO

FACTORY-TO-YOU

PUT THIS CHASSIS IN YOUR PRESENT CABINET

PUSH-BUTTON TUNING

FOREIGN RECEPTION DIRECT

Liberal trade-in allowance on many new models shown in FREE catalog—from 6 to 18 tubes—up to 5 bands—including automatic record-changing radio phonos . . . Home Recorder, etc)

(User-Agents Wanted)

UP TO $25.00 TRADE-IN ALLOWANCE

EASY TERMS

ONLY $19.95 COMPLETE CHASSIS WITH TUBES AND SPEAKER

MIDWEST RADIO CORPORATION
DEPT. 128-CC CINCINNATI, OHIO

ITCH STOPPED QUICKLY

Use D.D.D. Prescription

Quick relief from itching of eczema, rashes and other externally caused skin troubles

35c bottle, at druggists, proves it or money back

INVENTORS

Patent your invention—send now for our new FREE copyrighted booklet "How to Protect Your Invention" and "Invention Record" form. This booklet guides the inventor from the first step toward patent protection to final profit making from his invention. Reasonable fees, conscientious counsel. McMorrow and Berman, Registered Patent Attorneys, 129-B Barrister Building, Washington, D. C.

with the Eskimoes north of Canada's northernmost. harbor. Also traveled through the grizzly country in northern British Columbia and spent one winter on the bleak shores of the James Bay.

Will welcome letters and exchange stamps with any member in any corner of the world and will try to write interesting letters.

Wm. Lake

Box 15,
Clair, Sask., Canada.

My Hobby Is Postal Cards

Dear Secretary:

Being a reader of your magazine two years, I have now resolved to write this letter to you.

I should be greatly obliged if you include my name in the fellowship of the Ends of the Earth Club.

As I'm interested in postal cards, of which I've a collection, I should be very grateful if you send me a list of members also interested in this hobby.

Hoping to be attended in my request, I sincerely thank you.

Yours truly,
J. J. S. Braga

Caixa Postal 1212,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

A seasoned traveler for his fifteen years

Dear Secretary:

Please enter my name as a member of your club. I am the son of a soldier, and have been stationed in the Philippine Islands, have visited China, Panama, Hawaii, Guam, and old Mexico. I am 15 years old, and I can write interesting letters of various experiences and promise to answer all letters received from either sex. Will exchange photos and souvenirs.

Sincerely,
Corbett Meeks, Jr.

800 Chaffee, Road
Ft. Sam Houston, Texas.

ENDS OF THE EARTH CLUB MEMBERS

WITH hundreds of letters from new members coming in every day, it is obviously impossible to print all of them in the columns of the magazine. The editors do the best they can, but naturally most readers buy SHORT STORIES *because of the fiction that it contains. Below are more names and addresses of Ends of the Earth Club members. Most of these members will be eager to hear from you, should you care to correspond with them, and will be glad to reply. Note these lists, if you are interested in writing to other members. Names and addresses will appear only once.*

Henry C. Dobbyn, 140 Addison St., Chelsea, Mass.
John Dockery, 284 East 206th St., New York, N. Y.
Thomas Dockery, 284 East 206th St., New York, N. Y.
T. A. Dowell, U. S. S. *Houston*, Pearl Harbor, T. H.
Jemide E. Ebigbeyi, Marine Dept., Port Harcourt, Nigeria, W. Africa
Segundo C. Feliciano, 294 Calamba St., Guadalope, Cebu, P. I.
Flavio Ferreira, Rua da Candelaria 19, 3-an dar, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Enrique Freeman, P. O. Box 2, Fishers Landing, Thousand Islands, N. Y.
William Foey, 287 West Broadway, South Boston, Mass.
M. von Gebhardt, 2333 Market St., San Francisco, Calif.
Lou Gentles, 3197 Bainbridge Ave., Bronx, N. Y.
Robert W. Gentles, 3197 Bainbridge Ave., Bronx, N. Y.
Howard I. Hall, 1 Korson Block, Schumacher, Ont., Canada
John E. A. Hamilton, Enitonna High School, P. O. Box 30, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
M. Hansen, Box 144, Goodwell, Oklahoma
H. A. Henry, 9 Owen St., Barrie, Ont., Canada
R. D. Ireland, Target Repair Base, Pearl Harbor, T. H.
Olu P. R. Jack, c/o G. G. Whyte, Posts & Telegraphs, Port Harcourt, Nigeria, W. Africa
Robert Johnson, 3166 Bainbridge Ave., Bronx, N. Y. City
J. Archie Johnson, Jr., 101 East 49th St., Savannah, Ga.

James Hanover,
SHORT STORIES,
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y.

I enclose these four coupons from SHORT STORIES.

Please send me a list of Ends of the Earth Club members interested in stamp collecting.

Name .....

Address .....

LOWEST TIRE PRICES

$1.90 29x4.40-21 $2.20 28x4.75-19

GOODYEAR-FIRESTONE-GOODRICH-U.S. & OTHERS

All Other Brands

You Get More for Your Money

Save ½ buying from us under a positive LEGAL AGREEMENT to replace any tires that do not give 12 mos. service at ½ purchase price. We can do this because STANDARD BRAND tires when reconditioned with Boyd's expert workmanship, finest material and new methods do the work, as proven by thousands of satisfied users, all over the U.S.A. Convince yourself. Order Now.

12 Months REG'D WARRANTY with Each Tire

BALLOON TIRES			REG. CORD TIRES		
Size Rim	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$1.90	$1.05	30x3½	$2.10	$ .95
29x4.50-20	2.10	1.05	31x4	2.70	1.25
30x4.50-21	2.15	1.15	32x4	2.70	1.25
28x4.75-19	2.20	1.25	33x4	2.70	1.25
29x4.75-20	2.25	1.25	34x4	3.00	1.35
29x5.00-19	2.60	1.25	32x4½	3.10	1.45
30x5.00-20	2.60	1.25	33x4½	3.20	1.45
5.25-17	2.65	1.35	34x4½	3.20	1.45
28x5.25-18	2.65	1.35	30x5	3.40	1.55
29x5.25-19	2.65	1.35	H. D. TRUCK TIRES		
30x5.25-20	2.65	1.35	Size	Tires	Tubes
31x5.25-21	2.95	1.35	30x5	$4.00	$1.95
5.50-17	3.00	1.40	34x5	4.00	2.25
28x5.50-18	3.00	1.40	32x6-8P	6.70	2.95
29x5.50-19	3.00	1.45	32x6-10P	7.70	2.95
6.00-16	3.50	1.45	34x7	10.25	4.85
6.00-17	3.15	1.40	H. D. Truck Balloon		
30x6.00-18	3.15	1.40	6.00-20	$3.45	$1.65
31x6.00-19	3.15	1.45	6.50-20	4.10	1.95
32x6.00-20	3.15	1.55	7.00-20	5.45	2.95
33x6.00-21	3.40	1.55	7.50-20	6.25	3.75
32x6.50-20	3.50	1.75	8.25-20	8.45	4.95

All Tubes Guaranteed New — All Other Sizes

DEALERS WANTED

Send $1.00 Deposit on each Tire ordered. ($3.00 Deposit on each Truck Tire) Balance C. O. D. If you send cash in full deduct 5%. If brand ordered is out of stock we ship equal value.

BOYD TIRE & RUBBER CO., Dept. 818
4821-23 Cottage Grove Ave., CHICAGO, ILL.

She Got $400.00 for a Half Dollar

I will pay CASH for OLD COINS, BILLS and STAMPS

POST YOURSELF! It pays! I paid $400.00 to Mrs. Dowty of Texas, for one Half Dollar; J. D. Martin of Virginia $200.00 for a single Copper Cent, Mr. Manning of New York, $2,500.00 for one Silver Dollar. Mrs. G. F. Adams, Ohio, received $740.00 for a few old coins. I will pay big prices for all kinds of old coins, medals, bills and stamps.

I WILL PAY $100.00 FOR A DIME! 1894 S. Mint; $50.00 for 1913 Liberty Head Nickel (not Buffalo) and hundreds of other amazing prices for coins. Send 4c for Large Illustrated Coin Folder and further particulars. It may mean much profit to you. Write today to

B. MAX MEHL, 160 Mehl Bldg., FORT WORTH, TEXAS
(Largest Rare Coin Establishment in U. S.)

Insure and Speed Up
PROSPERITY

For many months, personal competition will be tremendous. Employers—up against new problems, fighting for survival and profits—will be able to pick and choose. Naturally they will prefer the trained man—the man who has special ability. If you want to speed up your prosperity and insure your share in the business pick-up, you must prepare yourself. And your first step is to get the facts about a proven training program. Check your subject below, write your name and address in the margin, and mail this coupon today.

☐ Higher Accountancy ☐ Law: Degree of LL.B.
☐ Salesmanship ☐ Executive Management
☐ Traffic Management ☐ Commercial Law
☐ Industrial Management ☐ Business Corresp.
☐ Business English

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A Correspondence Institution
Dept. 175-R CHICAGO

missing

missing

KNOWLEDGE
THAT HAS
ENDURED WITH THE
PYRAMIDS

A SECRET METHOD FOR THE MASTERY OF LIFE

WHENCE came the knowledge that built the Pyramids and the mighty Temples of the Pharaohs? Civilization began in the Nile Valley centuries ago. Where did its first builders acquire their astounding wisdom that started man on his upward climb? Beginning with naught they overcame nature's forces and gave the world its first sciences and arts. Did their knowledge come from a race now submerged beneath the sea, or were they touched with Infinite inspiration? From what concealed source came the wisdom that produced such characters as Amenhotep IV, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and a host of others?

Today it is known that they discovered and learned to interpret certain *Secret Methods* for the development of their inner power of mind. They learned to command the inner forces within their own beings, and to master life. This secret art of living has been preserved and handed down throughout the ages. Today it is extended to those who dare to use its profound principles to meet and solve the problems of life in these complex times.

AMENHOTEP IV
Founder of Egypt's
Mystery Schools

This Sealed Book—FREE

Has life brought you that personal satisfaction, the sense of achievement and happiness that you desire? If not, it is your duty to yourself to learn about this rational method of applying natural laws for the mastery of life. To the thoughtful person it is obvious that everyone cannot be entrusted with an intimate knowledge of the mysteries of life, for everyone is not capable of properly using it. But if you are one of those possessed of a true desire to forge ahead and wish to make use of the subtle influences of life, the Rosicrucians (not a religious organization) will send you A Sealed Book of explanation without obligation. This Sealed Book tells how you, in the privacy of your own home, without interference with your personal affairs or manner of living, may receive these secret teachings. Not weird or strange practices, but a rational application of the basic laws of life. Use the coupon, and obtain your complimentary copy.

Use this coupon for **FREE** *copy of book*

SCRIBE I. C. R.
The Rosicrucians (AMORC)
San Jose, California

Please send free copy of Sealed Book, which I shall read as directed.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....

The ROSICRUCIANS
SAN JOSE (AMORC) CALIFORNIA